

The
Superfund
saga

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The Last Domino



Reuters/Bettmann Newsphoto

**Romania tumbles,
but where will it fall?**

PAGES 8 & 9

'Underclass' myths affect poverty policy

By David Moberg

Here's a series of images to ring in the '90s: homeless people in doorways, drug wars on big-city street corners, high inner-city school dropout and out-of-wedlock childbirth rates, a work force ill-prepared for a competitive world.

During the Reagan years progress toward reducing poverty was reversed and a flimsy social safety net shredded, making the ravages of poverty more apparent. That alien mass of "others"—alien to the "hardworking, law-abiding" middle class—has emerged in popular and academic writing as the "underclass."

But it turns out that it's not so easy to pin down who or what this underclass is. As the sense of urgency grows that something must be done about the underclass problem in this decade, definitions make a big difference in gaining support for policies.

Contrary to popular imagery, most of the poor work, and most are white. Many "middle class" people are a divorce, a job injury or a plant closing away from poverty. Indeed, for every poor person whose condition becomes obvious—lying homeless on a street grate, for example—there are 10 to 20 others precariously clinging to shelter, according to sociologist Peter H. Rossi in his recent book *Down and Out in America*. Homelessness, he writes, is simply the aggravated condition of extreme poverty.

But "underclass," with its echoes of the old "undeserving poor," usually connotes not only poverty but non-mainstream behavior or values—that is, in the popular view, shiftlessness, amorality, criminality and irresponsibility.

Debate has long raged over poverty and how to treat it, in large part because it is such a morally charged issue. The prevalence of deep poverty in the midst of great wealth is one of the greatest indictments of the U.S. political-economic system—unless one can blame the poor for their position. Also, anything that eliminates the sting of poverty alters mechanisms for discipline of mainstream workers. At the same time, people who subject themselves to an unpleasant regimen of work easily resent poor people who are able to get some of the necessities of life without such drudgery—especially if the poor are black. Ironically, many of these same people envy rich people who can live in luxury, often without working.

Love thy neighbor: Compassion for the poor is frequently sorely tested. Many of the poor, often for reasons somewhat beyond their control, are socially unappealing or haven't obeyed social rules. That's why advocates of

the homeless try to feature homeless families rather than single men with alcohol problems. And that's why conservatives are more likely to focus on drug or alcohol abuse among homeless men. Rossi, however, found that only one-fifth of the homeless he studied abused drugs and one-third had alcohol problems—a high rate but far from the majority.

Of course, the poor are often poor precisely because they are more vulnerable: drug use or teen pregnancy by a wealthy white suburbanite carries fewer costs than it does for a poor young black or Hispanic woman. But the self-reliant individual morality of American culture is reluctant to acknowledge that nobody is completely the master of his or her own destiny.

The biggest question about the underclass would seem to be the extent to which its members are seen as living along a social continuum with the rest of society or as a radically different social group. At times that has led to a debate over whether the poor have distinct, non-adaptive, possibly self-destructive values or whether they are simply responding rationally to a situation that offers few opportunities.

Liberal analysts, largely since the 1987 publication of *The Truly Disadvantaged* by University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson, have been willing to acknowledge that the extremely poor often have serious behavior problems or that mainstream values are weakly enforced in poor neighborhoods. But unlike conservatives, liberals tend to see those behavior problems as ultimately rooted in economics and amenable to change with the right social policies and economic conditions. A great deal of academic research since Wilson's book has focused on questions concerning the effects of living in bad neighborhoods, the reasons for weak involvement in the job market, the potential influence of education, the degree to which poor blacks are socially isolated and the causes of teen or unwed motherhood.

No easy answers: There is often a policy debate—also precipitated by Wilson—over how aid should be administered to the underclass. The standard liberal "war on poverty" holds that aid should be aimed at the very poor, as with welfare payments. Wilson, however, contends that the underclass would benefit more from broad, inclusive social policies such as comprehensive health-care or public-jobs programs.

But who or what is this "underclass"? Sociologist Christopher Jencks, who organized a major conference on the underclass at the Northwestern University Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research last October, suggests that there are really several underclasses whose members may not overlap: small-time crack dealers, unwed teen mothers and unemployed young men who dropped out of high school may have in common little more than not being "middle class."

Since 1970, Jencks argues, an economic underclass of the chronically jobless has grown. Unskilled, inner-city blacks may have been hurt the most, he says, but the causes are not so much specific to them as they are to general economic and social policies that create chronic white joblessness as well.

But while an economic underclass has grown, Jencks reports that there has been no growth in a so-called cultural underclass. For example, he says, black educational performance has improved over the past two decades, despite the problems of inner-city schools. And black crime overall has decreased, contrary to images of gang mayhem. The likelihood of teen pregnancy has also decreased for blacks as well as whites.

There has, however, been a sharp increase in unwed motherhood, but the rate of increase has been greater for whites. From 1960 to 1986, Jencks reports, "the proportion of all children born to unmarried mothers rose from 2 to 16 percent among whites and from 23 to 61 percent among blacks."

In *The Truly Disadvantaged* Wilson argues that since the '70s, very poor blacks have become more concentrated in neighborhoods lacking traditional blue-collar jobs and have become increasingly isolated from black middle-class institutions. This creates an underclass characterized, he says, by people with weak ties to the legitimate job market and whose social life in hard-core poverty areas weakens these economic ties even further. For example, there are comparatively few role models

with steady work but many involved in criminal enterprise.

Wilson's argument resonates with the popular view that living in "bad" neighborhoods infects people with bad habits. But there are middle-class people living in even the most impoverished inner-city black neighborhoods, and demographers such as Douglas Massey of the University of Chicago and Reynolds Farley of the University of Michigan argue that there has not been a dramatic increase in economic segregation within the black community. Wilson, however, suggests that Massey and Farley were misled by studying census tracts instead of real neighborhoods, and he insists that traditional institutions like churches have declined in the poorest black neighborhoods.

Critical mass: There does seem to be a "tipping point" where poverty is so concentrated in a community that anti-mainstream behavior becomes dominant. Jonathan Crane, a research associate at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, has found that social problems tend to stay at some manageable level until a critical point when an "epidemic" explodes, especially for young males in big-city ghettos. But, he argues, this explosion of "bad" behavior—like dropping out of school—reflects reversible, short-term influences, not deep-seated character flaws.

Still, employers have blanket images of workers from "bad" neighborhoods that prejudice them against hiring even good inner-city workers, according to Joleen Kirschenman and Kathryn Neckerman, sociology graduate students under Wilson at the University of Chicago. Employers also are likely to locate their businesses far from poverty-stricken neighborhoods, making it harder for poor blacks to get jobs, Michigan State University economist Harry Holzer concludes in recent research.

IN SIDE STORY

But "good" neighborhoods—or schools—can make a difference. James Rosenbaum, a professor of education and social policy at Northwestern University, studied black welfare mothers from Chicago who moved to moderately affluent, mainly white suburbs. He found that the women were more likely to find jobs—although still at inadequate levels of pay—and their children were more likely to do relatively well in school. Yale University psychology professor James Comer reports that schools that involve parents and the community and show a keen sensitivity to childhood psychological development have demonstrated that they can effectively teach and encourage kids from the poorest homes.

It's also clear from research on underclass employment in Boston by Harvard University economist Richard Freeman and by Massachusetts Institute of Technology business professor Paul Osterman that strong local economies bring even the hard-core underclass into the regular labor market (although crime, such as selling drugs to the middle-class, still appears to some poor to be an appealing, profitable business alternative).

Often the rewards of good behavior have been slim. In the late '80s, minority women who finished high school and avoided unwed pregnancy also avoided poverty, but they could expect to earn about 30 percent less in real terms than their counterparts did 20 years earlier, according to research by economists Greg Duncan of the University of Michigan and Saul Hoffman of the University of Delaware. If the reward for "good" behavior by teenage girls is diminishing (as it has to a lesser degree for most Americans), the threat for "bad" behavior is great and growing even faster: earnings for unmarried, dropout black mothers dropped by half in the same time.

Blacks, more than whites, are increasingly unlikely to be married and living with their spouses. Wilson has argued that this is mainly because there are fewer "marriageable" black men available. Sociologists Robert Mare

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By Diana Johnstone

Europe's new direction hinges on German question

THE GERMAN QUESTION IS CENTRAL TO THE following three approaches put forth to reshaping a Europe suddenly recovering its dangerous old protean variety and vitality at the opening of the '90s.

Approach No. 1: This is the largely spontaneous approach propelled by German enthusiasm—an impulse toward rapid unification of the little German Democratic Republic (GDR) into the big Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Arguments are simple: German desire to be with other Germans in one state is natural and popular and therefore right. The emotion is real, and the far right is there in an election year to help it sweep away other considerations.

Demonstrations in East Germany have shown that instant reunification is an idea with mass appeal, although how much is hard to estimate. Reunification tends to be rejected by the first political opposition groups in favor of radical reform of an independent GDR. A December poll for *Der Spiegel*—a publication scarcely hostile to reunification—found 71 percent of East Germans wanting the GDR to remain a sovereign state, against 27 percent in favor of absorption into a single state with the FRG. Democratic elections promised for next May 6 should give a clearer measure of the nationalist danger.

Approach No. 2: This is the "New Atlanticism" proposed by Secretary of State James A. Baker during his December 12 speech to the Berlin Press Club, proposing a "new Europe" with a growing "substantive overlap between NATO and European institutions." Germany would be reunified, supposedly inside a transformed (more political, less military) but expanding NATO. Baker proposed a new treaty with the European Community (EC) to strengthen "institutional and consultative links." The Baker Doctrine means that the U.S. has no intention of taking its military foot out of the European door until it has struck a favorable bargain for a strong say in European political and economic institutions.

"New Atlanticism" is a hierarchal concept that implies retaining a privileged role for the Atlantic rim states, notably the U.S. itself and its historic allies, Britain and France, and enlarging the circle to include Germany.

The club may be gradually extended to junior members in the countries east of NATO, except for the Soviet Union, which is too big to dominate and thus must remain in semi-exclusion.

Approach No. 3: This is a more egalitarian European framework in which the German question could be settled to the general satisfaction of all concerned. The framework already exists: it is the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which includes all of Europe except Albania as well as the U.S. and Canada. The 1975 CSCE Final Act at Helsinki opened a peace process in Europe based on mutual security, cooperation and recognition of basic human rights that could be the foundation for Mikhail Gorbachov's "common European house."

Last November 11 the Soviet premier called for a "Helsinki II" process to open in 1990, starting with successful conclusion of the Vienna talks on reducing and limiting conventional forces in Europe. The Bush administration did not immediately answer, preferring its "New Atlanticism" and NATO. But other Europeans are responding favorably.

In his annual New Year's message, French President François Mitterrand made a surprise call for a "European Confederation" of both East and West European countries to come into being in the '90s. Winding up his six-month turn as president of the EC, Mitterrand's call for an all-European confederation by implication meant further strengthening of the EC to the status of federation, as EC Commission President Jacques Delors explained the next day.

The Mitterrand proposal supported Gorbachov by designating the Helsinki Accords as the basis for "a European Confederation in the true sense of the term, associating all the states of our continent in a common and permanent organization of trade, peace and security." He set preconditions: the countries of Eastern Europe would first have to

introduce party pluralism, free elections, a representative system and freedom of information. At the rate things are going, he added, this could be close at hand.

Mitterrand reportedly nipped in the bud the public criticism that was about to erupt in France in reaction to Baker's "New Atlanticism." Mitterrand's approach seems to be to avoid any open dispute with the Bush administration, the better to preserve his role as privileged European partner of a U.S. president who is weary of Margaret Thatcher and outrun by German enthusiasm. But whereas the Baker Doctrine would put NATO—and thus the U.S.—at the very center of the "new Europe," and the Soviet Union far on the periphery, Mitterrand's

Even West Germany's Social Democratic party has lost its 20-year grip on the German question.

European Confederation, based on the CSCE, would put the EC in the center and include the U.S. and the Soviet Union on equal footing.

In another sign that Mitterrand is moving to support Gorbachov now that his hand-holding with Chancellor Helmut Kohl seems to be over, Soviet and French diplomats met in Paris on December 20 for their first talks on ways to speed up the process of conventional and chemical disarmament in Europe. After years of obstructionism, Paris may be ready to help give Gorbachov the main thing he is asking from the West: progress in disarmament.

On December 19, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze paid a call to NATO headquarters in Brussels, "to see if it's worth joining." He used the visit to clarify Soviet concern over unfinished legal business regarding the status of the two German states.

He noted that Bonn apparently still recognizes a 15-year-old ruling by the West German constitutional court in Karlsruhe reaffirming the judicial validity of the 1937 borders of the pre-war German Reich. The question of German unity should be put on the agenda of the 35-member CSCE summit proposed by Gorbachov, he said.

Clearly, the FRG's ongoing claim to be the sole successor to the pre-World War II German Empire, thus denying any legitimate existence to the GDR and implicitly claiming territories now part of Poland and the Soviet Union, is the main cause of worry in the East about German reunification. The U.S. has always looked the other way while Bonn made claims amounting to a cheap verbal concession to a "rollback" policy too dangerous to pursue. It has been too easy to count on the Soviets to take the blame for blocking a German reunification nobody else wanted either. The more aggressive the West German claims, the more confident the Western allies could be that Moscow would block reunification. Bush administration policy, with its insistence on NATO and vague indulgence toward German nationalism, has not shaken off this cynical approach.

Dizzied by the speed of events and alarmed by attacks from the right in an election year, even West Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) has partly succumbed to the enthusiasm and, for the moment at least, lost its 20-year dominating grip on "the German question."

In sharp contrast to other parties in the FRG, the German Greens in mid-December defined a policy on "the German question" that calls for maintenance "within the foreseeable future" of two German states, both to respect international sensitivities and to protect the democratic reform process within East Germany.

The Greens support cooperation between the two German states on all levels, but "between equals." This requires recognition of the GDR as a sovereign state with its own citizenship. "The FRG must give up its doctrine that the 'German Reich' in its 1937 boundaries did not perish in 1945 but lives on in partial identity with the FRG," reads the Green policy statement. As a way to drop this doctrine, the Greens offer this ingenious

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INSHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

20-plus years of service

In the wake of the U.S. invasion of Panama and the subsequent ballyhoo from the mainstream media—pleased that during this conquest, unlike Grenada, they were invited along for the ride—it is time to take another look at Manuel Antonio Noriega. Information for this synopsis was provided by the Washington-based Council On Hemispheric Affairs and press reports.

Formative years: In 1966 the CIA recruited Noriega, then a low-level intelligence officer in the Panamanian army, to provide information on the unions that were causing problems for United Fruit Company. The young lieutenant rose through the ranks and in the early '70s became director of the military intelligence force known as G2. He began amassing a fortune from a network of illegal enterprises that included drug smuggling and money laundering. In fact, the Nixon White House perceived Noriega to be such a threat that in 1972 the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), in the secret Defeo Report, recommended that he be assassinated. According to Jose Blandon, a former Noriega adviser and money launderer, it was during these early years that Noriega began building personal files on prominent U.S. officials. Blandon, who in February 1988 testified before Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) and his subcommittee on terrorism, narcotics and international communications, maintains that information in those files could be a "time bomb" under George Bush and numerous other U.S. politicians.

Bush employee: In 1976 the CIA, during the tenure of Director Bush, began paying Noriega \$200,000 a year for his services. Although those payments were stopped by Bush's CIA successor, Stansfield Turner, it is alleged that they were continued by other U.S. agencies. Also under Bush's CIA watch, the Justice Department released its "Report on Inquiry into CIA-Related Electronic Surveillance Activities." This report revealed that the CIA, in the name of national security, was protecting a number of known drug traffickers from prosecution. Part of that report is still classified.

That drug thing: When Reagan came into office, Bush was named head of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction Service, the nation's largest drug-interdiction operation. Evidence suggests that Bush must have known of Noriega's drug dealings. Originally Bush claimed that he only learned of Noriega's narcotic's ties when the general was indicted on Feb. 4, 1988, by two Florida grand juries. Later, during the presidential campaign, Bush modified that statement, saying that he had heard speculation about Noriega's involvement in the drug trade, but had seen no hard evidence. He also admitted paying a December 1983 visit to Noriega in Panama. A former Panamanian military official charged that at this meeting Bush asked Noriega about the narcotics business. When the trip was exposed by the press in September 1988, the vice president's office denied drugs had been discussed. That denial was contradicted during the presidential debates when Bush said, "I went down [in 1983] and talked to the president of Panama about cleaning up the money laundering. And Mr. Noriega was there, but there was no evidence at that time." Which is not quite true. As early as 1978 the DEA learned that Noriega was visiting Medellin, Colombia, to meet with leaders of the drug cartel who were using Panama as a way station for drugs and money.

A falling out: The inescapable truth is that the Reagan administration overlooked Noriega's drug smuggling because he was helping the White House with its number-one war, the Washington-led contra insurgency. But the relationship soured. In 1987 the administration asked that the Panama Canal treaty be amended to allow the U.S. to continue using its military bases in the Canal Zone after Dec. 31, 1999. Those bases are vital to the U.S. intelligence network. In June 1986, U.S. National Security Agency officials acknowledged that their Panama station monitors intelligence activities in all of Central and South America. Noriega rejected the U.S. suggestion to revise the treaty. In a documentary aired a year ago on Britain's Thames TV, he claimed the U.S. was trying to blackmail him in an effort to keep the U.S. bases in Panama into the 21st century. In its September 1988 newsletter the Council on Hemispheric Affairs observed, "Once significant pressure had been mounted in favor of Noriega's ouster, both from the swelling internal opposition and Noriega's opponents on Capitol Hill, it appears that the administration decided to expedite his removal by further exposing his drug involvement, but tightly controlling the speed of the revelations in order to minimize any disclosures of his past connections with U.S. officials."



Gen. Manuel Noriega: from CIA-sponsored strongman to Bush-administration fall guy.

That's not nasty, that's art

SAN FRANCISCO—While banking at an automatic teller machine one notices an image of a nude woman on her back with a hand touching her clitoris as the computer spits out twenties. The poster says, "Just Sex." Waiting for the No. 8 in a bus shelter of ad space you see a poster of a hand stroking a penis superimposed on a Gap ad; it says, "Sex Is." Polite society is crumbling before your eyes.

A band of cultural activists called Boy with Arms Akimbo organized the "Just Sex/Sex Is" poster campaign in response to Jesse Helms' attempts to prohibit federal funding of "obscene or indecent materials." Helms singled out and questioned the artistic authenticity of the late Robert Mapplethorpe, a photographer whose work offers provocative, daring sexual content.

"Sex isn't right or wrong; it just is," says one Boy who wants to remain anonymous. The "Just Sex/Sex Is" campaign forces people to examine a broader view of sexuality rather than buying into the narrow social norm of what is "acceptable" sex. "Republicans think sex is nasty," says the Boy. "On a recent TV interview at home with Barbara Bush, Dixy, the family dog, started licking her secret-special place and Bar-

bara kicked her."

Frustrated by the repressive atmosphere of the Reagan-Bush era, Boy with Arms Akimbo put down their coffee cups, filled Safeway bags with brushes and wallpaper paste and poster the public byways to protest socially proscribed sexual and artistic expression.

The Boy with Arms Akimbo poster campaign began with a trial run in the Castro section of the city. One Boy was picked up by the police. After the Boy was released, the group reorganized at "Rebellion Central" and moved in the early morning hours to decorate the Federal Building. "The action looked so cool with all these arms moving up and down together," says the Boy. "It was like synchronized swimming."



Boy with arms akimbo

The poster has now spread beyond San Francisco to Orange County and New York City, with appearances planned in Omaha and Atlanta. The pro-sex message is also moving beyond the urban landscape to the human body with "Just Sex/Sex Is" T-shirts. The group's current project is a documentary film of recent cultural/political events in San Francisco.

Boy with Arms Akimbo claims to represent a spectrum of sexual preference and gender. The Boyness of their name and logo, which comes from a 1940s dictionary for schoolboys, does not signify an exclusively male membership. "It was just a groovy graphic," says the Boy. "We're men and women, gay and straight."

Armed with funny, salacious or symbolic images and fierce adhesive, Boy with Arms Akimbo is creative and non-violent. "We're subversive, not disruptive," says the Boy.

According to the group's prepared statement, "Our approach works more with intellectual subversion, seizing and manipulating the processes of advertising and mass media—all with the assumption of no budget, with an emphasis on individual and local autonomy and with plenty of hooligan energy."

—S.M. Thompson

A version of this story originally appeared in the San Francisco Sentinel.

Make room for Germans

BERLIN—Time is telling in West Berlin. Weeks after the first East Germans had roses pressed into their hands by excited Western hosts, the city is packed to the point of aggravation. A graffiti artist has already changed some of the public transportation signs from *U-bahn* to *Überfüllt-bahn* ("subway" to "stuffed way"). Western companies continue to shower Eastern visitors at the Berlin Wall with promotional cigarettes, cookies and magazines, but others who are less welcome in West German society are beginning to feel the pinch.

About 1 million Turkish immigrants live in West Germany, with 130,000 living in West Berlin. When the Turks arrived (the largest numbers between 1963 and 1973) they received scant welcome. Fleeing political repression and economic hardship, the Turkish population in Berlin joined the ranks of *auslanders* (foreigners) and suffered the typical manifestations of discrimination in housing, in employment and in the courts.

In 1987, Turks constituted 10 percent of West Berlin's population. They accounted for 20 percent of the officially unemployed. Thousands of them—women in particular—are trapped in a sort of indentured servitude, working for hospi-

tals and cleaning firms under industry-specific temporary work permits at sub-basic pay.

In the past, non-Germans have been targeted by right-wing extremists like Franz Schoenhuber's neo-Nazi Republicans. But since the floodgates opened to the East, race tension in West Berlin has palpably increased, with the Turks looking likely to be the victims of choice.

One week before the opening of the wall, a young German man was sentenced for the May murder of a 17-year-old Turk, Ufuk Sahin. A friend who was with Sahin at the time of the assault told the court that the German youth screamed, "There are so many foreigners here. We have no security." When Sahin responded, "I'm a person too," the 29-year-old assailant pulled out a knife and stabbed him to death.

The court refused to accept racism as a decisive factor in the case, apparently ignoring the plea by the Sahin family's lawyer that "we must not give the impression that Turkish citizens can be killed at a discount in this city." The murderer received a five-year prison term.

"Obviously I was happy about the opening of the wall," says Rakibe Tolgay, a Turkish organizer in West Berlin. "But I also have my fears." Tolgay runs a community center and training project for Turkish women and girls. "For many of us a certain type of racist xenophobia is a fact of our daily lives. We have never es-

caped that here. And to judge by recent election results, that kind of prejudice is on the offensive, and we can only expect it to get worse."

When West Germans went to the polls in April, Schoenhuber's Republicans won as much as 11 percent of the vote in some areas where they ran candidates. In traditionally progressive West Berlin they received the support of some 90,000 voters, or 7.5 percent of the electorate.

"The exact repercussions cannot be judged yet, but clearly the mood of German celebration could have harsh consequences, particularly for those of us at the 'expendable' end of the social and economic spectrum," says Tolgay.

It has long been West German policy to grant citizenship to anyone who can prove that he or she is of ethnic German descent. With the massive influx of Easterners to the West, that right is now being acted on. Meanwhile, so-called *auslanders*, even those born in West Germany, have no voting rights.

A young woman whose family came from Turkey tells of an assault during a weekend when more than 4 million East Germans packed into the city. On a crowded subway, a German man threatened a Turkish woman with a stick. The woman's 14-year-old daughter—born and bred in Berlin—fought back. The man had told them the Turks had to go to make room for the Germans.

—Laura Flanders

'Twasn't the season

At the beginning of the last decade Ronald Reagan told us that he could cut billions of dollars from crucial human-services programs because the programs were wasteful and encouraged sloth. He argued that if the government just got out of the way, the private non-profit sector could step in.

By a fortunate confluence of factors—including tongue-lashing from the president—charitable giving by corporations increased markedly in the early '80s. But corporate charity in recent years has decreased.

This year's United Way drive in Boston lagged behind its target goal throughout the campaign. United Way officials blamed the problem on the slowing economy. With corporations cutting back on expenses and laying off workers, there are fewer employees around to give money. And, according to some reports, the national food-bank network Second Harvest has seen a 60 percent drop in donations from large food companies.

While 1989 figures aren't yet available, records for the past years show a decline in corporate charity. In 1988, corporations gave \$4.75 billion, compared to \$4.6 billion the previous year. Adjusted for inflation, this represents a decrease of 1.45 percent. And that drop follows decreases of 1.84 percent and 4 percent in the two years before.

Many directors of non-profit agencies are asking, "What happened?"

Usually changes in giving levels are related to changes in corporate profit levels—profits and charity tend to rise and fall together. But not anymore. According to *Giving USA*, the annual report of the American Association of Fund-Raising Council, since 1985 corporate profits in the U.S. have risen by nearly 20 percent, while corporate giving dropped by 7 percent.

The report says part of the reason for the unusual decline may have been government-fostered greediness: "The Reagan administration's policy of deregulation, as well as its ideological advocacy of free-market economics, helped loosen the reins of social concern, encouraging corporate decision makers to pay relatively less attention to public issues that did not affect them directly and relatively more attention to the 'bottom line.' This weakening may well have been reinforced by a conservative 'me first' ideology that ostensibly permeated the nation during much of the present decade."

Charity and selfishness often go hand in hand: charity is the salve for the guilty conscience. Greed and charity have risen together in the '80s. But ultimately the reasons for the dip in charitable giving probably have less to do with cultural mores than business realities.

"Mergers and acquisitions certainly have had some impact," says Larry Sterne, editor of *Non-Profit Times* magazine. The feeding frenzy of leveraged buyouts has some corporate giants gorged with heavy

debts. Consequently, to keep their stockholders happy, these corporations are forced to squeeze out as much cash flow as possible, trimming fat wherever they can. And just as Reagan saw social services as fat in the federal budget, corporate managers see charity programs in the same way.

Another factor in this decline of charitable giving is the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which lowered corporate tax rates from 46 to 34 percent. *Giving USA* notes that this measure made charity more expensive to corporations. With the lower tax rate, the deduction taken for each charitable dollar was also lower. Charity, in effect, became 22 percent more expensive.

The decline of corporate giving in recent years is certainly a problem for non-profits. Yet it is not as alarming as it might appear. Corporate giving accounts for less than 5 percent of total charity donations in the U.S. Most of the \$100 billion given away to non-profits—more than 80 percent—is given by individuals. And individual giving has continued to rise.

But apart from the particular decline in corporate giving is the more general question about the appropriateness of using private charity to address social problems. The real problem, increasingly laid bare as corporate giving levels decline, is the failure of government to provide adequate social programs for its citizens.

—Mark Feinberg

Stop that docket: Richard Gregory, the federal prosecutor who obtained the two indictments against Noriega, has said that the State Department originally asked him to hold back on his investigation because Panama was a "friendly country." Gregory said, "It was more like: 'Why do you [Justice Department officials] cause us [in the State Department] this problem?'" as opposed to: "That's a great job. Congratulations!" ... There were a number of people who said: "What the hell is this, who is this assistant DA making foreign policy?" Apparently Gregory did his job too well. In October 1988, he discovered that drug kingpin Jorge Ochoa was on vacation in Venezuela. The Venezuelan government gave Gregory permission to seize Ochoa, but the operation was cancelled by U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela Otto Reich, the former CIA official who managed Reagan's domestic contra propaganda operation. Two months later Gregory quit his job with the Justice Department. He said, "It was obvious to me they didn't want me there." The administration was likewise successful in preventing federal prosecutor Robert Merkle from investigating the Medellin cartel's operations in the Bahamas. Merkle said he was warned about indicting Bahamian Prime Minister Sir Lyndon Pindling by a Justice Department official who called to say, "We don't want any more Noriegas."

One is enough: The general is now in custody, or, as ABC's Peter Jennings said the night of his surrender, "being brought to justice." Who knows what will happen next? The upcoming trial presents several possibilities. Noriega could have cut a deal with his former boss Bush. Or maybe he plans to get revenge by telling all. In which case a January 1984 warning by then-DEA Administrator Francis Mullen might be borne out. In a memo to the Justice Department, he said that the National Narcotics Border Interdiction Service headed by then-Vice President Bush could become "this administration's Achilles heel for drug-law enforcement."

And appearing in the flesh...

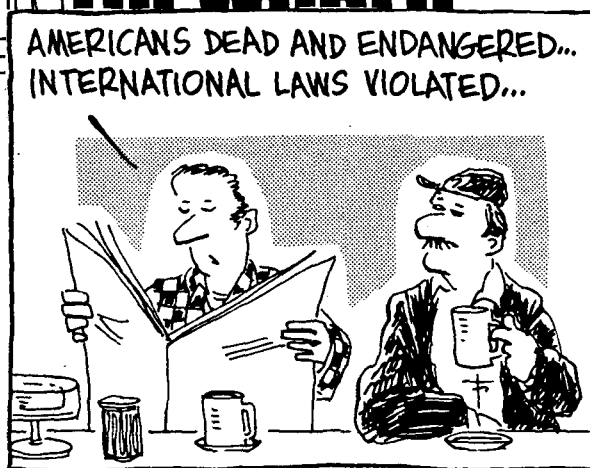
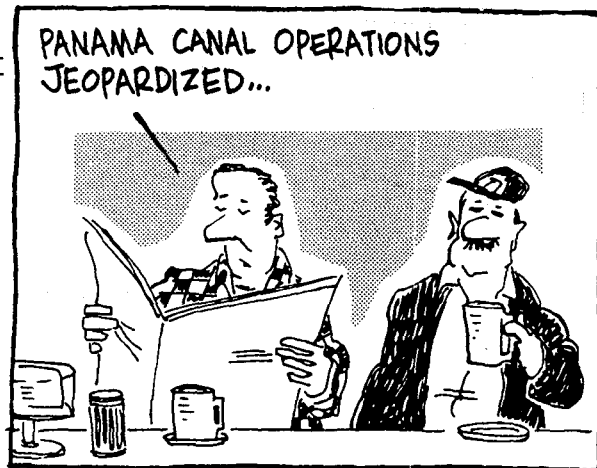
In 1985 Noriega invited then-U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica Curtin Winsor to spend a weekend at his Pacific beach house on the Azuero Peninsula. Winsor was intrigued by the general's offer of deep-sea fishing, good food and discussions of Central American politics. He asked his friend, then-U.S. Ambassador to Panama Ted Briggs, whether he should accept the invitation. As David Blundy and Gideon Rachman report in the *Sunday Correspondent* of London—a story written a few days after the failed coup attempt last October: "Briggs roared with laughter and told Winsor he was about to spend the weekend in one of the most notorious 'honey traps' in Latin America. 'It was a set up,' says Winsor. Gen. Noriega lured senior American officials from Congress, the CIA, the Defense Department and the administration to the villa, which was stocked not only with seafood but also with bevvies of pretty girls or pretty boys for the delection of his guests. The bedrooms were wired for sound and equipped with hidden cameras. As the important guests cavorted, they were captured on film, which the general would store in his vast film library as an insurance policy for the future. Winsor turned the invitation down. Many other U.S. officials did not. 'I can't give you names, but look around,' said Winsor. 'Who's soft on Noriega? That's where you should look.' All of which could eventually give new meaning to Noriega's boast that he has 'George Bush by the balls.'"

Loose zippers sink hypocritters

It was Rev. Moon's *Washington Times* that broke the story of the relationship of Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) with a male prostitute, thereby providing fodder for a right-wing assault on one of the nation's most liberal congressman. *Extra!*, the publication of the media watch group FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) observes, "Ironically, the exchange of sexual affection for money—the essence of prostitution—didn't use to bother *Washington Times* editor in chief Arnaud de Borchgrave. He once boasted to *Esquire* in an article that appeared in January 1981 of his career as a Washington-based 'gigolo' in the late '40s: 'Apparently I was quite attractive in those days to older women. Of course, I didn't have any money. They would slip me cash under the table at restaurants to pay the check. It was very European.'"

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IN THE WORLD



U.S. invaded for all the wrong reasons

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

THE U.S. INVASION OF PANAMA IN DECEMBER caused hundreds of deaths and several hundred million dollars in property damage, but it also led to the ouster of a brutal, corrupt dictator. Coming on the eve of the scheduled appointment of a Panamanian to oversee the canal, the invasion probably prevented the abrogation of the Panama Canal treaty. Every historical action must be judged, however, not only by its immediate results but also by the larger framework in which the action took place.

On this score, President George Bush invaded for the wrong reasons and he is already drawing the wrong lessons from the invasion's ostensible success. From all accounts, Bush's decision to invade stemmed from domestic political imperatives rather than from finely wrought foreign-policy calculations. Like the Reagan administration's invasion of Grenada in 1983, the invasion of Panama was an attempt to win public favor by exploiting American anxieties about imperial decline.

By the same token, the invasion reflected the Bush administration's narrow view of global reality. Like former President Ronald Reagan, Bush is fixated on the military trappings of power while ignoring the deeper problems of the global economy that affect both the U.S. and Latin America. Instead of seeing the invasion as an unfortunate diversion justified by unique circumstances, Bush viewed it as an essential feature of his Latin American policy—at one with the "war on drugs." This will have disastrous consequences for U.S. foreign policy.

Politics and passion: The first point to recognize about the U.S. invasion is that it had become almost unavoidable. Whoever was in the White House—Republican or Democrat—would probably have called in the troops. The reason was partly the wackiness and intransigence of Manuel Noriega, but it was also the political whirlwind into which the issue had been swept.

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Anxiety about national decline has been a central feature of American politics for almost two decades. It has been fed by defeat in Vietnam, humiliation at the hands of Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and the replacement of "Made in the U.S.A." by "Made in Japan." To the extent decline is real, its roots are economic rather than military, but Americans have tended to focus on

POLITICS

symptoms rather than on causes—on anti-American mullahs, military hardware and the specter of foreign-made drugs. When an issue becomes part of this political psychology, it acquires a life of its own. This is what happened in the case of Noriega and Panama.

The adoption of a Panama Canal treaty in 1978 had been a high point in U.S.-Latin American relations, but the battle over treaty confirmation in the Senate had awakened primordial anxieties about American national decline, which new-right politicians exploited in 1978 and 1980. The canal issue resurfaced in the summer of 1987, when Panamanians took to the streets to oust Noriega, who had seized power in 1981 after the death of Gen. Omar Torrijos. Then in February 1988, two Florida courts issued indictments against Noriega for cocaine trafficking.

By linking Noriega to the anti-drug mania, the Florida indictments transformed him from a foreign nuisance into a potent symbol of evil. Noriega replaced Khomeini as the American Antichrist. He symbolized both U.S. impotence abroad and the erosion of America's spiritual infrastructure. He became a prime participant in the 1988 presidential election and then in the politics of Bush's presidency.

During the presidential race, the Reagan administration tried desperately to force Noriega out of office but couldn't strike a deal with him because of Bush's concern about being compromised in the eyes of the electorate. According to the *Washington Post*, Bush and then-Secretary of the Treas-

ury Jim Baker, who later became Bush's campaign manager, sabotaged negotiations in May 1988 that might have resulted in Noriega voluntarily leaving office.

Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis, unwilling to run a populist economic campaign, hinged his own political fortunes on tying Bush, then the administration drug czar, to Noriega. Dukakis repeatedly accused Bush of having kept Noriega in power. Then, during Bush's first year as president, Democrats kept up the attack. When the October 1989 coup by former Noriega loyalist Maj. Moises Giraldi failed, Democrats criticized Bush for not throwing the military behind Giraldi, even though the coup, if successful, might have installed a regime equally as corrupt as Noriega's. It was "wrong," said Sen. David Boren (D-OK), the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, "to stand by and allow these people to fail."

Bush's failure to dislodge Noriega also reawakened charges that he was a "wimp." Immediately after the failed October coup, Bush began actively planning an invasion. There were reasons Bush had to act quickly. In June of 1989, the Senate had voted 63 to 31 to reject any nominee that Noriega proposed for canal administrator. With the transfer of administration of the canal due on January 1, the U.S. faced the possibility that it would have to abrogate the Panama Canal treaty. The pressures for an invasion had become irresistible.

Of course, Noriega did his part to justify an invasion, declaring a state of war with the U.S. and encouraging his thugs in mid-December to murder a Marine lieutenant and to rough up a Navy lieutenant and his wife. But while the Marine's murder merited a strong response, it hardly justified an invasion. In May, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense Richard Brown had told Congress of 1,200 canal treaty violations by the Panamanians without suggesting that these violations merited Noriega's forceful overthrow. Bush used the December brutalities

as a pretext for invading. As one administration official admitted to the *Post*, "I'm not sure Bush wasn't looking for an excuse at that point."

In explaining their actions afterwards, Bush administration officials suggested that if the U.S. had not invaded in December, it would have had to invade soon afterward, as Noriega threatened American forces at the canal. But outside of rumor, the administration never presented any concrete evidence that Noriega was planning an assault against U.S. forces. Nor did U.S. forces uncover any evidence of this during the invasion.

The other factor in Bush's decision was that he had become obsessed with Noriega in the same way that the late President John Kennedy had been obsessed with Cuba's Fidel Castro and Reagan with Libya's Muammar Khadafy. "I've been frustrated that he's been in power so long, extraordinarily frustrated," Bush told reporters just after the invasion. In this respect, Bush was not only exploiting irrational popular fears and anxieties about drugs, decline and Noriega—Bush had embodied those anxieties.

Own worst enemy: The invasion has bolstered the Bush administration's military approach to foreign policy. Pentagon officials are now arguing that the U.S. needs new funds for "low-intensity warfare." Administration officials are also pressing for a naval blockade of Latin American drug supply routes. Meanwhile, the Bush administration continues to ignore the region's economic problems. Indeed, the U.S. war on drugs will probably significantly worsen the Andean nations' economic woes by removing their most profitable export without providing any new outlets for export.

Improving Latin America's economic health is not merely a moral imperative. One of the main reasons for the American trade deficit is the sharp reduction in the '80s of American exports to Latin America—a result not of Japanese competition but of austerity programs forced on Latin American countries by rising debts to U.S., Japanese and Western European banks. From 1950 to 1981, Latin American imports to the U.S. rose at annual rate of 10 percent. From 1981 to 1985, the U.S. increased its share of the market to 38 percent, but its total exports fell 26 percent. From 1985 to 1990 the pattern has continued. If during this period Latin American imports had increased at the same rate as they had increased from 1950 to 1981, the U.S. would not have had a trade deficit.

Ironically, Panama was one of the few countries that was not burdened by overwhelming debt, but American economic sanctions have accomplished what U.S. banks failed to achieve. From 1987 to 1989, Panamanian imports from the U.S. declined by 14 percent. And the U.S. will now have to spend more than \$2 billion to restore the Panamanian economy to its condition before the sanctions.

If the Bush administration wants to find a scapegoat for U.S. problems in Latin America, it would do better to look around Wall Street than around Panama City, Managua or Medellin. It should be putting economic sanctions on John Reed's Citicorp rather than on Panama's Noriega. But the Bush administration, like the Reagan administration, is determined to look elsewhere for both scapegoats and solutions. □

By Salim Muwakkil

NOT ONLY DID THE U.S. INVASION AND OCCUPATION of Panama trample on one of the most sacrosanct principles of international law—non-intervention—the action also had a racist motivation, according to Carlos Russell, a former Panamanian ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS).

Relations between the U.S. and Panama

PANAMA

have always contained a racial dimension, Russell contends, and the dynamics of those relations can easily be discerned by glancing at the casualty figures of Panamanian civilians during the recent invasion. According to his sources, more than 7,000 civilians—mostly black—were killed in the invasion and thousands more were injured.

What's more, he says, U.S. forces are summarily arresting thousands of Panamanian men and holding them in custody without charge. He numbers the homeless at near 20,000. Official U.S. sources list 400 dead, 2,000 wounded and 13,000 displaced in its effort to oust the regime of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. "The U.S. callously wiped out thousands of Panamanian lives just so it could experiment with the Stealth bomber and other high-tech weaponry," Russell charges. "They used the Panamanian people like they were guinea pigs."

Rabi-Blancos: This utter disregard for civilian casualties cannot be explained by any reasons but racism, he insists. "It's an insult to the intelligence of the U.S. to say it invaded an entire country just to get rid of Noriega, the so-called drug dealer. Why then did they bomb black neighborhoods like San Miguelito and Chorrillo until there was nothing left but rubble?" Russell asks. "They were trying to send the black and brown Panamanians a message that our day is over and that control is once again in the hands of the 'Rabi-Blancos.'" That term means literally "white tails," Russell explains, and is Panamanian slang for the white business oligarchy that controlled the country as a proxy of the U.S. from its 1903 creation to the 1968 military coup by Col. Omar Torrijos Herrera that overthrew President Arnulfo Arias Madrid.

Caribbean roots: Russell, 55, was born in Panama City, but has lived in the U.S. since 1955. He has a doctorate in political science and has taught at Brooklyn College for the last 20 years. In the '60s he organized a conference of Panamanians in this country that was instrumental in sparking talks on renegotiating the canal treaty. He was Panama's alternate delegate to the United Nations when U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Torrijos finally signed the renegotiated treaty in 1977. He was appointed ambassador to the OAS in 1988.

Russell's ancestors, like those of many Panamanians, were among the thousands of Caribbean blacks enlisted to build the Panama Canal during the early 1900s. "Panama is actually a predominantly black country," Russell contends, although he concedes there is no official census data to document his claim. "To those who know the country, there is no doubt that most of its inhabitants are black or various racial mixtures of black, Indian and white, which are called mestizos."

But despite their greater numbers, Russell says, darker Panamanians have remained clustered on the lower rungs of society. Economic and political control of the coun-



Gen. Manuel Noriega waves from where the U.S. would like to put him—behind bars.

Racism a factor in invasion, says former OAS ambassador

try has always been held by the Rabi-Blancos; this is a demographic pattern disturbingly similar to that in many Latin American countries with links to the U.S.

Russell's reading of Panamanian history casts the U.S. as the major villain. By actively supporting a white business oligarchy that has grown fat on canal-generated largesse, the North American giant has helped perpetuate Panama's grossly uneven distribution of wealth. In fact, Russell contends, the

Some 7,000 civilians—mostly black—were killed and thousands injured in the invasion, and U.S. forces arrested and held thousands of Panamanians without charge.

U.S. invaded the country 13 times primarily to maintain the economic and racial status quo.

The 1968 coup, engineered by the country's national guard under Torrijos' leadership, was an attempt to alter the country's colonial relationship with the U.S. and to narrow Panama's wide and race-specific economic disparities. "When Omar [Torrijos] came into power, he started changing things. Several black Panamanians were appointed to important government positions for the first time: we had a black minister of the treasury, a black minister of justice and a black ambassador to the OAS. But more than that, we began to feel that we could control our own destiny as a nation."

Russell recalls that Torrijos worked out an arrangement with the oligarchy in which

he allowed them continued economic power but little political power. The government thus became a major protector and employer of black and mestizo Panamanians. "Many in the oligarchy resented this arrangement and have been consistently trying to undermine it," Russell says. "With this latest U.S. invasion it looks like they'll get their wish."

Invasion reasons: President George Bush said that his reasons for invading the tiny Central American country were to safeguard American lives, to defend democracy, to combat drug trafficking and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal treaty. To achieve those objectives, Bush launched the largest U.S. military operation since the Vietnam War, involving at least 24,000 troops and the latest high-tech weaponry.

The invasion plunged Panama into anarchy, resulting in massive destruction of property and widespread looting. According to the Dec. 31, 1989, edition of the *New York Times*, U.S. officials were somewhat "embarrassed" by the "collateral damage—as civilian casualties and property damage were euphemistically called in combat operations," that occurred during the invasion. In addition, according to Pentagon figures, 23 U.S. troops were killed and nearly 400 wounded.

Russell argues that there were three real reasons for the invasion. First, to destroy the Panamanian defense forces. "This was done to prevent Panama from having the capability to defend the canal in 1999, when we were supposed to assume full control according to the treaty." Thus the U.S. would be justified in maintaining its own security forces in the Canal Zone despite provisions in the treaty that specify a total transfer of control to Panama.

Second, the U.S. wanted to change Torrijos' 1968 arrangement and reassert control over the Panamanian government. "The U.S.

attempted to do this in the so-called free election it flagrantly tried to buy for \$10 million last May," Russell claims.

This is the election that Noriega nullified, an action U.S. officials point to as an example of his disregard for democratic principles. Russell sees things a bit differently. "The CIA openly announced it was financing the opposition campaign of Guillermo Endara, and its support clearly was not limited to financial assistance," he explains. "Now, just imagine for a moment if the Japanese, seeking a better business environment, announced they would begin financing and offering other kinds of assistance for the campaigns of conservative Republicans. How do you suppose most Americans would respond to that? And that's not even mentioning the stringent economic sanctions the U.S. had already imposed on the country."

Third, the U.S. wanted to get rid of a man who had stood up to it. After Noriega refused to allow former National Security Adviser John Poindexter to conduct contra operations in Panama, he suddenly became an enemy to the U.S., Russell contends. "A number of U.S. officials had written several letters commending Gen. Noriega for his drug-fighting efforts. What could suddenly have changed him from a staunch ally in the drug war into a criminal of such reputed evil?" he asks. "I am amazed and angered that the U.S. could stoop to action that is so transparently full of deceit. But I'm even more amazed that the American people seem to eat it up."

Black criticism: Russell is encouraged by the response of the African-American politicians who denounced the invasion. Rep. Charles Hayes (D-IL) has called for a federal investigation of the Panamanian civilian death toll and for emergency aid to those Panamanians left injured and homeless by the U.S. invasion. Rev. Jesse Jackson blasted the mainstream media for reporting more on the details of Noriega's personal life than on the "mass graves where hundreds of nameless, faceless civilians were buried."

Jackson charged that the media surrendered its "watchdog role" and became a "cheerleader for the invasion." At a news conference at Operation PUSH headquarters in Chicago, Jackson said, "Those of us who depend on the American media know more about the color of Noriega's underwear and his [alleged] fondness for voodoo dolls than we do about what motivated our government to invade his country."

Even Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), chairman of the House Narcotics Committee, criticized the attack. "As much as I would like to get rid of the bum in Panama, I don't see the legal authority for the use of the military." And, Rangel said, resources for the war on drugs could be better spent "in our own cities and towns, where the real war on drugs is being waged."

Although Russell remains outraged by the U.S. invasion of his native country, he is comforted by what he says is the U.S.'s eroding credibility. "No other country in the world, except Britain, is recognizing the U.S.-imposed Endara government. Of course they will have to eventually, but their current reluctance tells the U.S. that it is very low on moral currency. Events in Eastern Europe, where Moscow has adopted a hands-off policy, have isolated the U.S. and its primitive style of gunboat diplomacy even more." Russell only hopes the lesson sinks in before the U.S. destroys another country and kills thousands more civilians in the name of democracy. □

IN THESE TIMES JANUARY 10-16, 1990 7

By Paul Hockenos

AN END TO THE REIGN OF NICOLAE CEAU-
sescu was something few Roman-
ians thought possible before his
biological demise. Now the tyrant
is gone, and Romanians are warily looking
beyond their improbable revolution.

The death toll of post-war Europe's worst
bloodbath, possibly as high as 10,000, climbs
as news of mass graves and slaughtered vil-
lages come to light. In its aftermath a shaky
interim government has set in motion a
transition to a multiparty constitutional de-
mocracy. The nation's centuries-long cycle
of dictatorships and repression, however,
casts a forbidding shadow over the pros-

ROMANIA

pects for a qualitatively different society.

Since the dictator's execution December
25, 1989, the country appears to have at-
tained an uneasy stability. While the real bal-
ance of power is still tenuous, it is clear that
it no longer rests in the people's hands. Iso-
lated units of the Securitate, Ceausescu's
paramilitary police force, are still launching
sporadic attacks on civilians from mountain
camps. The army, which shifted its allegiance
to the citizenry after massacring thousands
of demonstrators, maintains a heavy pres-
ence across the country. In Bucharest, a
group of party reformers have grabbed power,
intent on protecting their own position as
well as turning around Ceausescu's disas-
trous policies as quickly as possible.

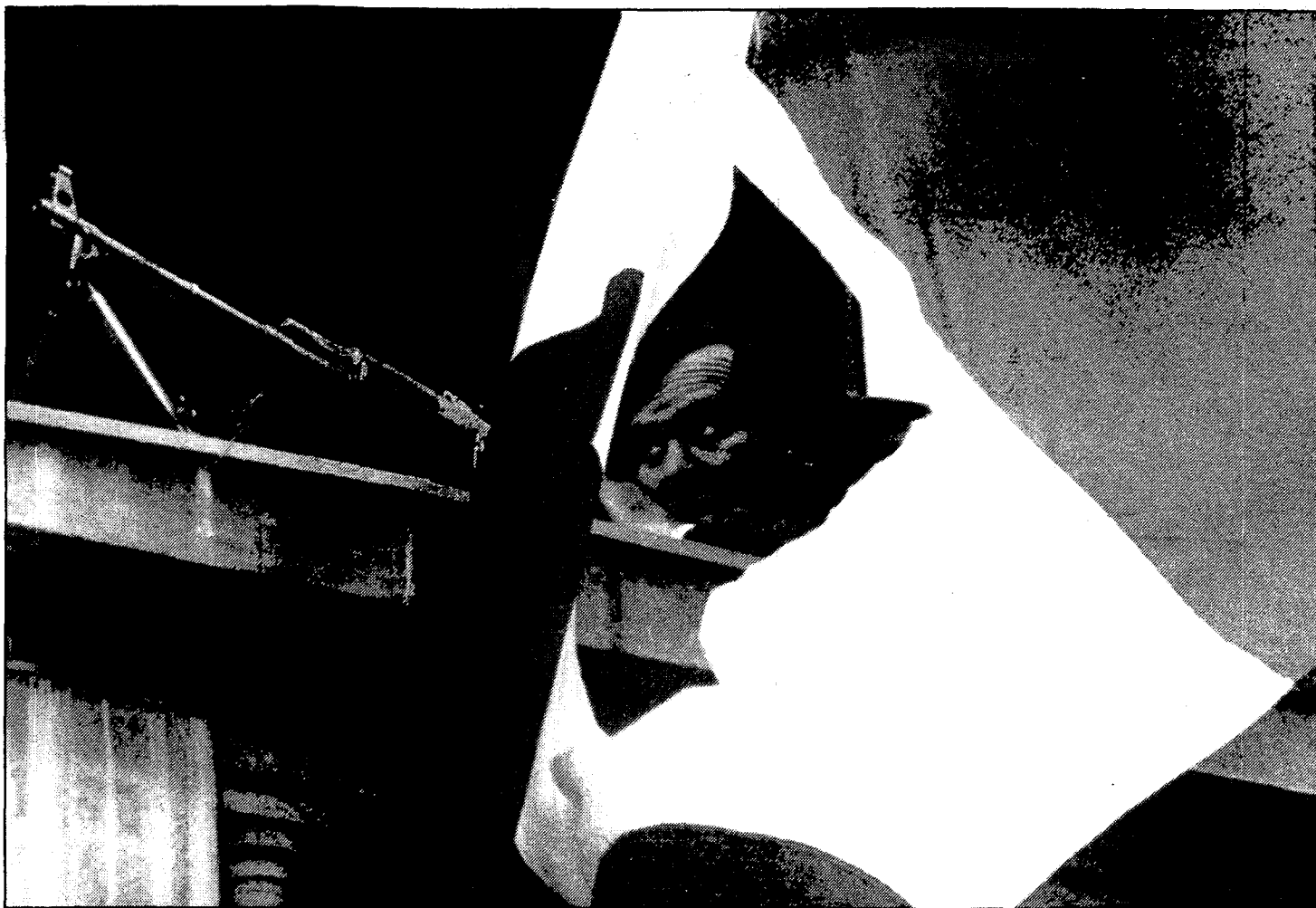
The first priority of the new executive,
formed out of the opposition group the Na-
tional Salvation Front (NSF), is to supply the
population with food, gas and electricity. In-
ternational relief efforts led by Hungary have
begun to get medicine to the thousands of
casualties in the war-torn cities. Neverthe-
less, shortages are so acute that the coun-
try's sixth consecutive winter of hunger is
certain to be its most severe yet.

The export of quality agricultural goods
and petrochemical products, which financed
such pet projects as Ceausescu's lavish
palaces and the Securitate's state-of-the-art
weaponry, has already been reversed. Basic
foodstuffs are no longer rationed, but bread
queues stretch for blocks, according to Hun-
garian relief workers. Since Romania has the
capacity to feed its 23 million population,
government spokespeople claim that the
shortages can be rectified in two to three
years. Small peasant farms, which 15 years
ago accounted for nearly half of the country's
produce, will again be encouraged.

Unscientific reasoning: Under the
"Genius of the Carpathians," a man with four
years of elementary-school education, pol-
icy came either directly from Ceausescu's
office or from the sycophantic clique that
surrounded him. If industrial or agricultural
experts objected to the scientific quackery
behind his reasoning, they found themselves
the next day without a job.

"He created a new social category—the
power scientist," said one former official.
"These are people who become scientists
when they acquire power and cease to be
scientists after they lose it."

Real information represented a threat. Day
after day during Ceausescu's oligarchic 24-
year rule, the party newspaper propagated
the self-heralded Conducator's personality
cult with front-page photos of him and his
wife Elena visiting their prosperous factories
or graciously accepting the adoration of
their people. In late December all censorship
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A civilian fighter in the Communist Party Building in Bucharest is seen through a hole cut in the Romanian flag to remove the party symbol.

The domino tumbles— but where will it fall?

laws were lifted. In Transylvania, where a
2-million-strong Hungarian minority had
been denied access to media in their native
tongue, an impressive daily is now publish-
ing. Private typewriters and photocopy
machines, before monitored by the secret
police, are no longer illegal. Students in Cluj
are purging the faculty of its party hacks and
are embarking on a full-scale restructuring
of the sham university system that had for-
bidden the study of such subjects as phil-
osophy, theology and sociology.

The provisional government recognizes
that pulling Romania out of the cellar of the
European house will be no simple task. Cen-
tralized industrial production, based almost
exclusively on low-quality heavy machinery,
will take its toll on the economy for years
to come, said leading NSF member Silviu
Brucan in an interview with Western jour-
nalists.

"For 10 years we did not import any mod-
ern technology. Ceausescu had a fantastic
hostility to the third stage of the industrial
revolution—computers, communications,"
said the one-time ambassador to the U.S.
and the U.N. who had been living in a tiny
village in domestic exile since 1987. Not one
plant for producing computers was included
in the latest 30-year plan.

The transition to a modern, industrial
economy will proceed slowly, in several
stages. "We won't act to lift barriers against
private enterprise until after the elections,"
said Brucan. "It's a matter of focus—you
can't improve material life quickly and insti-
tute deep economic reform. We will use the
levers of power that Ceausescu has neg-
lected."

A small circle of friends: Although elec-
tions are scheduled for April and a new con-
stitution is in the works, the direction of

political reform has already come under fire
from nascent opposition parties. The 11-
member ruling group was selected from the
previously unknown NSF, a coalition of party
reformers, dissidents and intellectuals who
took power immediately after Ceausescu's
fall. Conspicuously absent from the new ad-
ministration is Laszlo Tökés, the Timisoara
pastor on whose behalf the first demonstra-
tion was staged, which in turn sparked the
nationwide rebellion. Rather, power appears
concentrated in a small circle of the former
old guard. Although its members lack popu-
lar legitimacy, the general feeling of "any-
one but Ceausescu" has enabled these lead-
ers to solidify their base. At the moment
they appear at least nominally in control of
the army.

The extent of the interim body's commit-
ment to pluralism and power-sharing is still
unclear. After announcing that it would not
contest elections, the NSF reversed its posi-
tion. "The committee will be so powerful,"
said Brucan, "that there will be very little
room outside of it. But, of course, other par-
ties will operate. We will ensure that they
do."

Within the top leadership are many former
ministers who lost their positions after fall-

**The provisional
government recognizes
that pulling Romania out
of the cellar of the
European house will be
no simple task.**

ing into the ruler's disfavor. Gorbachov-
minded reformer Ion Iliescu, the executive
committee's president, is representative of
its membership. The son of a founding party
member, he joined up at the age of 14. A
promising star, Iliescu rose rapidly through
the Stalinist bureaucracy to high positions
under Ceausescu. But when he publicly
criticized Ceausescu in the early '70s,
Iliescu's demotion from one post to another
began, ending with his most recent job as
vice director of a scientific publishing house.

The charismatic 59-year-old, long viewed
as a possible successor to Ceausescu, is con-
sidered well equipped to stabilize the reign-
ing domestic turmoil. Personable and intel-
lectual, he is an excellent communicator and
is respected within the bureaucracy as well
as abroad. And the new man in Bucharest
was a friend of Gorbachov's during their col-
lege days in Moscow and enjoys the Soviet
leader's full support.

The long road ahead: In contrast to the
East German or Czechoslovakian opposition,
an organized underground had no room to
bud under Ceausescu's dictatorship. Yet by
early January several still-undefined new
parties and groups had hit the campaign
trail. In addition to four parties—including
an ecological group—an independent trade
union, a student league and organizations
representing the Hungarian and German
minorities have formed. The official Roman-
ian Communist Party, for years only a hol-
low front for Ceausescu's purposes, expired
along with its leader, but a revamped party
will stand in the April vote.

With the exception of a virulent anti-com-
munism, the parties have yet to outline even
sketchy platforms. The brand-new Liberal
Party demands the introduction of a market
economy, full privatization and new laws to
facilitate foreign investment. The National
Christian Peasant Party, certain to be a sig-
nificant force in years ahead, expresses the
strong conservative nationalism that the rev-
olution has unleashed. Affiliated with the
Romanian Orthodox Church, the party urges
a "moral rehabilitation on a Christian and
peasant foundation, which for 2000 years

proved to be the Romanian nation's backbone."

That tradition has been at the center of the country's tragic history. Unlike the other Eastern European countries, Romania has no democratic precedent or legacy of a sustained popular movement. Centuries of monarchy, fascism in the '40s and four decades of nationalist Stalinism inform the political culture. Ceausescu's tactical depoliticization of the working class has left only a handful of intellectuals capable of thinking beyond the structures of totalitarianism.

Ceausescu's ideal proletarian, now nearly a quarter of the population, was the peasant-turned-worker. At least in the near future, the working class is likely to play a very conservative role in Romanian politics.

The old powers of the military and the church have already re-emerged. The army has begun to assert its authority, maintaining control of government buildings and disbanding the civilian militias. Equally dangerous is the influence of the nationalistic Orthodox Church, whose values run deep in native Romanians. Both forces will figure in

any key government decisions. There is a real possibility that an army-nationalist coalition will operate behind the government's liberal facade, wielding the decisive power in Bucharest.

Whatever the future holds for Romania, socialism is not in the cards. Concepts such as equality and freedom are ones that Ceausescu made his own, twisting them into their opposites. So extreme was the people's oppression that these words are now distrusted with great intensity. Even the government reformers refuse to pay lip service to

the original ideals of their former party. The absence of a public sphere, or even limited freedom of thought, has inhibited the development of a political consciousness with which to approach social questions.

The impetus for change in Romania has always come from outside. In its four-month transition to democracy, those external forces, from East and West, are certain to clash with the traditions that have dominated the nation's history for centuries. □

Paul Hockenos is *In These Times'* correspondent based in Hungary.

France looks to 'rescue' Romania

By Diana Johnstone

WHEN THE ROMANIAN UPRISING BROKE out, the French rushed massively to the aid of a country where many people speak their language fluently. The first senior Western official to reach Bucharest was France's dashing state secretary for humanitarian action, Dr. Bernard Kouchner, who reported that Romanians used the French word *merci* to say thank you.

IMPERIALISM

"You can't believe how much they love us," the head of the French Red Cross, Georgina Dufoix, a leading Socialist, told her compatriots over television from Bucharest. Even though unfamiliar announcers kept saying "Budapest" for Bucharest, French media followed Romanian events closely. The private TV chain, La Cinq, excelled in its coverage and lost one of its best journalists, Jean-Louis Calderon, who was crushed by a tank in the dark.

French families sent the children away from the television on Christmas eve so they wouldn't see the images of Romanian corpses. The film of the Christmas "trial" of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu was carried in full on three French chains simultaneously with its first showing over Romanian television.

Romania had a special impact in France not only as the bloody climax to the previously non-violent series of upheavals in Eastern Europe, toppling by far the worst of its Communist regimes. The Romanian drama seemed an almost incredibly appropriate climax to the bicentennial of the French Revolution, which in France has been celebrated with emphasis on the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Most of all, Romania promised to offer new scope to French influence in Eastern Europe. For the first time, a break-away country from the Soviet camp is not looking primarily toward Germany—or in Poland's case, to the U.S.

France to the rescue? The nature of this potential French influence remains to be seen. Ideally, President François Mitterrand's France could help tutor its politically backward Latin cousins in democracy and human rights. The French Embassy announced plans to help the Romanians draft their new constitution. Along with such specialized aid in building democracy, Romania also risks an influx of French "new philosophers" looking for a last frontier for their anti-Sovietism. Moreover, France has been the refuge of choice for generations of Romanian intellectuals, some of whom may now return home.

The Romanian exile communities in France and Italy are reported to be strongly monarchist, favoring a restoration of exiled King Michael, whose 1940-47 reign included an alliance with Nazi Germany, some of World War II's most savage massacres of Jews and a canny last-minute switch of alliances to the victorious Allied side in 1944.

Romania is no democratic Czechoslovakia. Nor does it have the national political experience of Poland, Hungary or Bulgaria, all kingdoms going back to the Middle Ages. A country based on the linguistic identity of its Romance language and culture rather than political traditions, Romania never had a national government of its own until the late 19th century. To rule the new state, it got its royal family from the German Hohenzollerns. The main foreign hero in Romania between the two world wars was Mussolini, whose title of "Duce" was translated into Romanian "Conducator" and used by a fascist strongman before being recycled by Ceausescu. If Romania reverts to its political traditions, it can only revert to feudalism or fascism.

The hope is that Romanians have changed with the times. Many of the transition leaders were Romanian "red-diaper babies," raised in relative privilege because of their parents'

The Christmas "trial" of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu was carried on French networks.

early services to Communism in the '30s and '40s but opposed to the Ceausescu system. A big question is the extent to which an uprising—the one that happened or one that would have happened a few days later—against Ceausescu had been planned in advance by leaders who turned up on the National Salvation Front (NSF). Oddly enough, some French media appeared anxious to give Gorbachovian plotters credit for overthrowing the dictatorship, the better to disqualify them from taking part in the democracy they were installing.

On New Year's Day, French state-run TV FR3 lured transitional Prime Minister Petre Roman into a live broadcast he had been led to believe would be an interview with French Prime Minister Michel Rocard. There was no Rocard. Instead Roman was abruptly presented with a film taken by an amateur on December 22 allegedly indicating that the NSF had been plotting against Ceausescu for six months. This journalistic coup went out over Romanian television, which had tuned in for the Roman-Rocard encounter. French

television seemed proud of this crash course in journalistic *glasnost* for Romanians, although it would never dare play such a trick on its own prime minister.

The film showed a group of people around NSF Chairman Ion Iliescu drafting a communique in the Central Committee building only minutes after Ceausescu had escaped by helicopter from the roof. In the course of their lively discussion over what to call themselves, Gen. Nicolae Militaru, now acting defense minister, exclaimed, "But the NSF has already been functioning for six months." More evidence is needed to conclude whether the front he referred to and the one then forming were the same. Otherwise, there is nothing in the film to dishonor the participants.

French media kept asking Romanian dissidents and exiles whether "the revolution has been confiscated" by the pro-Gorbachov people.

Clearly, if the Gorbachovians remain in power, Soviet influence could be maintained, or rather, strengthened. If they are rejected in a wave of anti-communism, France may hope that its own influence will grow proportionately.

Meanwhile French media can practice their anti-Communism on what remains of their own Communist Party and its leader Georges Marchais, under heavy attack for his past vacation holidays as a guest of Ceausescu. This was the cutting edge of a general free-for-all among French politicians, each party accusing each others of friendly relations with the fallen tyrant. They were all right; France, with its "anti-superpower" pose, had warmly applauded Ceausescu's stress on national independence.

Economically, Romania is potentially better off than the other major Eastern European poorhouse, Poland, thanks to Ceausescu's policy of starving the people to pay off the foreign debt. The debt was indeed paid off last spring, three years ahead of time. Ceausescu was an ideal leader by International Monetary Fund standards, but this is an ungrateful world. Thanks to the anti-Soviet nationalism kept alive by both Ceausescu and his enemies, many Romanians are convinced that their food was all shipped to the Soviet Union. However, available figures suggest that Ceausescu preferred selling Romanian produce to hard-currency countries in the West, and that it was in fact the Free World that consumed the food Romanians were deprived of. Being debt-free puts Romania in a relatively good position to build trade with the West, and especially with its number one customer: France.

Essential to the Gorbachovian revolution is the establishment of the rule of law, at home primarily, but international law as well. This means the recognition of principles such as non-intervention. Not the least sensational details in the thundering spectacle ending the Cold War were the appeals from the West to Moscow to send the Red Army into Romania to help the uprising. The most bizarre of these pleas came from exiled former King Michael, calling on the Soviets to help the Romanian people get rid of their "foreign" oppressors, meaning Arabs allegedly working inside Ceausescu's notorious Securitate police.

Principles and double standards: The Soviet leaders quite rightly kept their heads and stuck to the principle they had just managed to establish, namely that military intervention in other countries is wrong. This is a principle that the U.S. and its allies occasionally hold so sacred that they prefer to support Pol Pot in the United Nations and on the killing fields of Cambodia rather than forgive the Vietnamese for violating it in order to stop the Khmer Rouge massacre. To see the Soviet Union insist on applying the principle even to itself is potentially embarrassing to the U.S.

To meet this embarrassment, Secretary of State James Baker substituted a double standard for a principle: the Soviet Union supported democracy by staying out, whereas the U.S. supported democracy by going in, he explained.

In France, it was touch and go between the principle and the double standard. Former Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson was the clearest voice for the principle. "I don't believe in military intervention," he said. "I condemn it on the part of the Americans in Panama, and I'm very happy that the Soviets resisted whatever pressure they were under to intervene militarily." Foreign soldiers inevitably awaken nationalist resentment, even when they come to liberate, as Cheysson pointed out.

Cheysson's was a fairly lone voice. At an uncertain point in the fighting in Romania, the current French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas suggested organizing volunteer brigades to fight in Romania, a suggestion immediately echoed by a number of French intellectuals, notably Harlem Désir, the popular spokesman of the anti-racist youth organization SOS Racisme.

This allowed the daily newspaper *Libération* to conclude that "civil society" in France had produced a new idea during the Romanian crisis: that of "the duty to intervene." The daily, still routinely described as "left," said that this happily disposed of the "clumsy" suggestion of Socialist Party leader Pierre Mauroy that the military budget could be cut in favor of social spending since the Soviet threat was fading. Military might was still necessary for France's "voice to be

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Europe

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suggestion: the FRG "must recognize itself as an independent state"—independent, that is, of the old German Reich. This "self-recognition" would put an end to the pretense that it is not constitutionally possible to give up territories that belonged to the Reich in 1937 and are now part of Poland. Recognition of GDR citizenship should be combined with the possibility of acquiring double nationality in both German states for those who want it, the Greens add.

To "Europeanize the German question," the Greens support the call for a special meeting of the CSCE to be held in Berlin—East and West—this year to set rules for East-West cooperation on a basis of equal rights. Recognition of the two German states and the Polish border should be incorporated in an all-European agreement binding

under international law, equivalent to the peace treaty that was never negotiated between Germany and the Allies after World War II. The responsibility of the four powers—the U.S., USSR, Britain and France—for Germany and Berlin should be transferred to the CSCE framework.

The Greens also promised to campaign against German nationalism and for "demilitarization" in both Germanys, including drastic cuts in the two military budgets and the withdrawal of Allied military units from Berlin.

The SPD has rushed to lavish support on East Germany's newborn Social Democratic Party, while breaking off the dialogue it had pursued for years with the country's ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED). The SPD had come under attack from the Christian Democrats for these contacts. The Greens indirectly criticized this by observing that "it makes no sense to cut off contacts and discussion with the SED at the very moment when a renovation process is taking place in that party."

In contrast to other West German parties each backing its own East German subsidiary in the May 6 elections, the Greens promised to give support, including material support, to all opposition groups in the GDR fighting for social emancipation if they are not tied to other West German parties. Of course, the Greens added, their "special solidarity" was for the Green movement in the GDR, which "like us puts the importance of ecological questions in the overall context of social renovation and strives for an alternative to 'real socialism' as much as to capitalism."

The party plans to sponsor a work group of economists from East and West to formulate proposals for cooperation that amount to "an alternative to the buying up of the GDR by FRG firms."

Oder-Neisse evaded: The popular president of the Bundestag, liberal Christian Democrat Rita Süßmuth, opened the New Year by suggesting that once East Germany holds its democratic elections, the two German states should issue a joint statement recognizing the definitive nature of the Oder-Neisse line between Germany and Poland.

She was immediately called down by fellow Christian Democrat Herbert Czaja, president of the powerful League of Germans driven out of Eastern Europe after World War II. Czaja said selling out German territory was banned by the West German constitution.

Chancellor Kohl managed to get through all of 1989 without taking a public stand on the question. □

Underclass

Continued from page 2

and Christopher Winship partly confirm this: when black men have steady jobs, they are more likely to get married, but when black women have jobs, they appear often to hesitate about marriage, especially to a man without steady work.

Blaming the victim: There has always been a strong tendency in the U.S. to blame the poor for their own misfortunes. It has been extremely hard to muster popular support for the poor unless they could be portrayed as deserving or unless they benefited from broadly based programs. (One reason there are now few older people among the homeless, unlike any time up through the 1950s, is improved Social Security payments.)

This recent research on poverty and the underclass, much of it presented at the Northwestern University conference in October, provides some clues for future policy. First, as Jencks emphasizes, there are many distinct issues that need to be addressed separately, not one simple cause for everything associated with the different underclasses. Second, it is obvious that something close to local full employment greatly helps even the hard-core underclass. The major problems—and solutions—are economic, even if there are grave problems with the behavior of parts of the underclass. Third, even in concentrated poverty areas, people can and do—especially with some support—educate and organize themselves, despite few resources and many obstacles.

The main division among proponents of social aid for the poor is between those who would target aid to the very poor and those who, like Wilson and sociologist Theda Skocpol of Harvard, think the poor will ultimately benefit most from broadly based programs that benefit working and middle-class families as well.

In part, advocates of universal programs—which can still include targeting to the poor, Skocpol argues—believe only that strategy can build solid political support. Universal programs might include, as Skocpol has proposed, guaranteed child-support assistance (collected from absent fathers but supplemented when necessary by the government), generalized child-care assistance and parental leaves, job training and relocation assistance and universal health care. Advocates of targeting counter that current federal-budget constraints doom universal programs: politicians today simply are not willing to vote for big social expenditures,

and if there are limited funds they should go to the neediest.

But while the needs of the very poor may be the greatest, they are usually different in degree only from marginal or even full-time workers a notch or two above them. And from a societal standpoint, the universal systems usually are more efficient and effective: universal programs like social security usually don't involve as much administrative overhead and usually don't miss as many needy as targeted programs do. Universal health care in countries like Canada has proven far less costly and far more comprehensive than our patchwork system of private insurance and targeted government programs.

Universal systems also can provide assistance scaled according to need—not arbitrarily cut off by some targeting guidelines—and they are less likely to create second-class systems for the poor, as targeted medical care and housing (most obviously the notorious shelters for the homeless) often do now. They create a more cohesive society that recognizes common fundamental needs and incorporates everyone, even if the most needy benefit most heavily. And the experience of the '80s shows it is easy to slash targeted programs for the poor but harder to cut back comprehensive programs like Social Security.

In the coming battles of the '90s, it is worth insisting on guaranteed housing, health care, jobs, education and other basic needs for all, and not being cowed into halfhearted, albeit warmhearted, measures. □

Romania

Continued from preceding page

heard." The newspaper concluded with evident relief that the changes in the East "do not necessarily open prospects of peace and stability."

The choice of the double standard, or "the right to intervene," was expressed in France's veto of a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning the U.S. invasion of Panama. The invasion to discipline a company agent was grotesque, but never mind. The manifest destiny of the U.S. may be to get bogged down in weird conflicts with Latin Americans it has corrupted. In the 19th century, Bismarck deliberately encouraged French imperialism in Africa to keep the French busy far away while Germany built itself into the foremost industrial power on the Continent. Twenty-first-century Europe may see a comparable interest in letting the U.S. chase its own tail in Latin America. □



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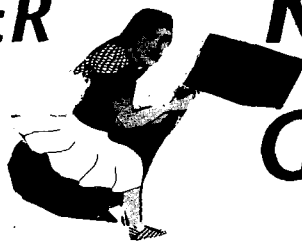
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STUPOR FUND

By William K. Burke

ONCE AGAIN, THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL Protection Agency (EPA) has promised to reform the scandal-plagued \$10.1 billion Superfund toxic-waste cleanup program. But although the EPA's new proposals seem to promise the tough program the American public has demanded ever since the poisoned families at Love Canal first entered the national spotlight, a closer examination shows that Superfund's new direction will let the polluters get away with cheap, ineffective cleanup plans while the EPA works overtime to lull the growing grass-roots toxics movement into what may be a false sense of participation.

EPA Administrator William Reilly unveiled the new Superfund plan in June. It is contained in a 160-page management review of the Superfund program dubbed "the 90-day review" because it took three months to complete. It portrays the agency as responding to the harsh criticism of the Reagan administration's fainthearted forays into toxic-waste cleanup.

The 90-day review contains 50 proposals for large- and small-scale Superfund reform, but the most important changes can be grouped into two broad initiatives.

- The EPA insists it wants to encourage more community involvement at each cleanup site by reforming the Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) program, which awards Superfund money to people who live near toxic-waste sites, allowing them to hire independent engineers and scientists to examine the EPA's data and cleanup plans.

- The EPA also claims it will use its enforcement powers to make polluters do the

ENVIRONMENT

cleanups, thus stretching federal money and encouraging polluters to take responsibility for their own messes. This enforcement-first approach is the opposite of the Reagan administration strategy of having the federal government pay up front for Superfund cleanups and then trying to claim the money from the polluters. Lew Crampton, the EPA's new assistant administrator for community affairs and director of the 90-day review, says the change to an enforcement-first approach means Superfund "is no longer [Reagan EPA chief] Lee Thomas' program. It is Bill Reilly and George Bush's program."

Several other of the 50 proposals deal with decreasing staff turnover. The typical EPA Superfund site manager remains in his or her job for only 18 months. But at the average Superfund site, it takes eight years from the time the pollution is discovered until cleanup work begins. Other key changes advocated include promoting the development of new toxic-waste cleanup technologies and streamlining the regional and national Superfund bureaucracies.

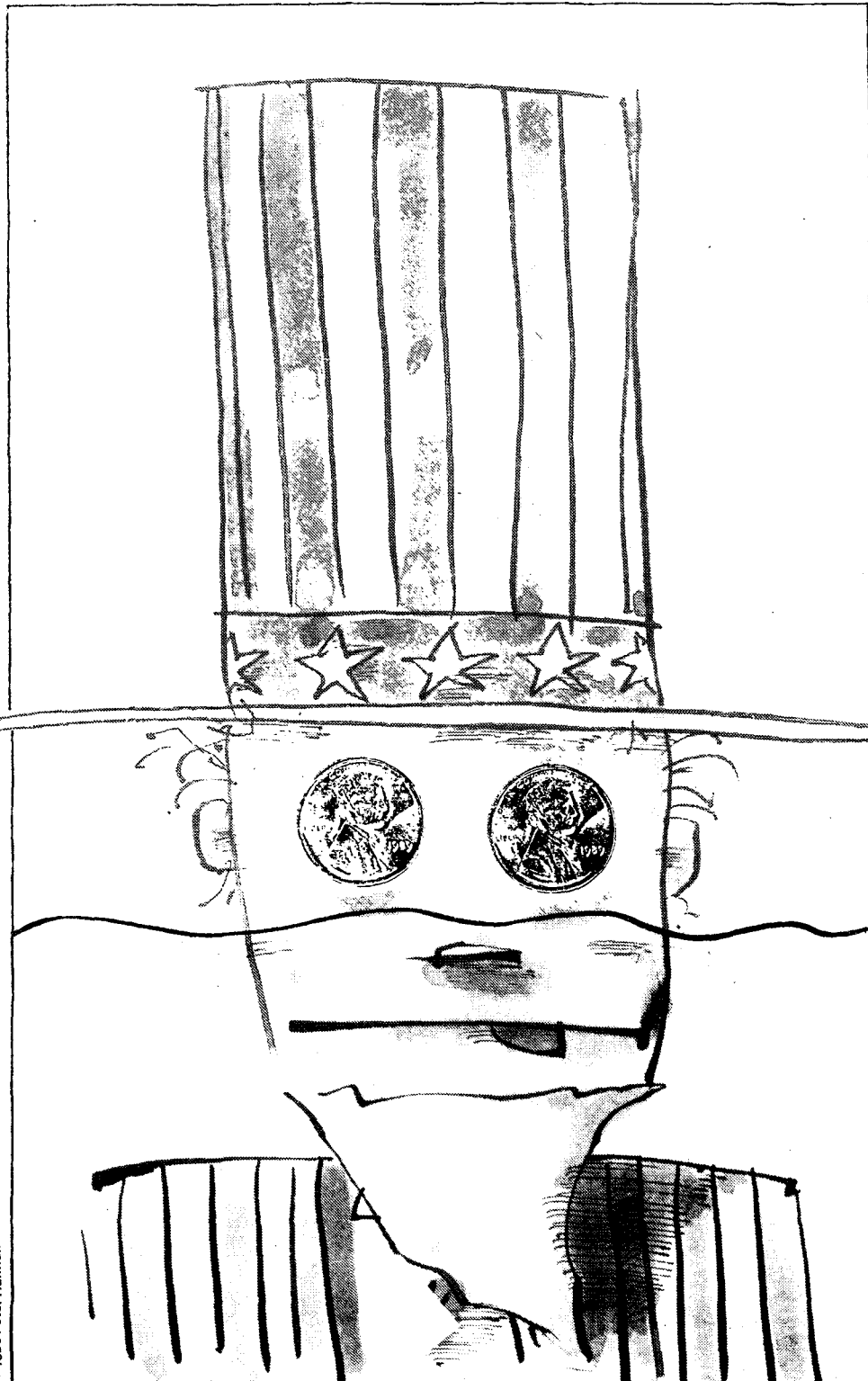
Crampton asks the public to be patient with the agency's new plan. "I don't want to use an unfortunate analogy, but it's sort of like trying to steer one of those huge supertankers—it takes a while for it to glide and then move off in another direction," he says.

At first glance, the Superfund reforms sound promising. Even traditional EPA critic Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), chairman of the Senate Environmental and Public Works

Subcommittee on Superfund, Ocean and Water Protection, praised the enforcement-first strategy when Reilly presented it to the subcommittee last June. But since then the EPA has piloted the Superfund program toward the same old shoals of corporate self-interest.

The Superfund program was founded in 1980 as a quick fix for what was believed to be a limited problem affecting a few isolated sites. During the anti-environmentalist frenzy of the first Reagan administration, EPA head Anne Gorsuch followed a do-nothing Superfund strategy aimed at proving that nothing

Is the EPA's cure for the Reagan-era toxic hangover worse than the ailment?



c 1990 Peter Hannan

needed to be done.

Attempted infanticide: Gorsuch's Superfund policy came close to destroying the infant program until she was fired in March 1983 for her role in an influence-peddling scandal at the EPA. In two and a half years, only five sites had been cleaned up. In the 1984 book *Season of Spoils*, author Jonathan Lash concluded that the Reagan administration hoped to kill the program when it came before Congress for reauthorization in 1985.

But the Republicans underestimated both the strength of the grass-roots toxics movement and the concern of the U.S. public about the country's thousands of toxic-waste sites. Citizen backlash against Reagan's Superfund policy forced Congress to pass the 1986 Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act (SARA), one of the toughest environmental laws ever enacted.

SARA strengthened the EPA's Superfund enforcement powers, set deadlines and quotas for cleanups, mandated permanent cleanup methods whenever possible and allocated funding for citizens to hire experts to review EPA data.

After the 1986 reforms, the EPA employed a Superfund strategy commonly called "fund lead" or "shovels first, lawyers later." The plan was that once a site reached the National Priorities List (NPL), the catalogue of the most dangerous toxic-waste sites demanding Superfund attention, the EPA would use Superfund money to clean up the site, then go to court if necessary to make the polluters pay for the shovels, backhoes, clay caps, groundwater monitoring equipment or mobile incinerators the cleanup required.

It was to be "cleanup first, sue the bastards later, but [the EPA] largely forgot about suing the bastards," says Blake Early, an attorney who represented the Sierra Club in several Superfund tracking efforts conducted by a coalition of environmental groups. By last April the EPA had recovered \$230 million from actions at 328 sites—about \$700,000 per site, at a time when a cleanup cost an average of about \$10 million. Furthermore, the cleanups went almost as slowly as they had under Gorsuch. At the end of the 1988 fiscal year the NPL contained 1,175 sites; only 18 had been cleaned up and removed from the list.

Industry-minded: The EPA appeared determined to justify the industry-minded critics who claimed that the SARA reforms were unworkable and too tough on corporate America. For instance, Congress had authorized the EPA to spend up to \$8.6 billion on Superfund through 1988 by borrowing money against future legal attempts to recover cleanup money from polluters. But the EPA never used that borrowing authority and spent only \$2.5 billion on Superfund cleanups in that time—less than 30 percent of what the agency could have raised.

The EPA's implementation of the portions of SARA that were designed to allow local residents to oversee cleanups at Superfund sites is another example of the agency's willingness to defy Congress. It took more than a year for the EPA to propose rules for implementing the TAG program, and the rules the agency produced covered 73 pages with agency jargon and required that citizens' groups produce matching funds equal to 35 percent of their grant request, even though

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Congress required only 20 percent.

The TAG program then became a forum for scandals in Jacksonville, Ark. (see *In These Times*, August 2) and at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal site near Denver. At the arsenal site, Region 8 EPA officials offered to help a citizens' group fill out the complex TAG application if the group agreed to stop working with organizers of the National Toxics Campaign, a grass-roots environmental group. The citizens' group refused the offer.

Helpful hints: The 90-day review suggests that the EPA reduce the TAG matching-fund requirement and streamline the application process for communities requesting grants. It even contains sample case histories meant to illustrate the plight of people trapped living near toxic-waste dumps. "I don't think we listened very well," Crampton says, summarizing the review's criticism of the EPA's attitude toward toxics victims.

But recent actions show that despite the promised reforms, the EPA still agrees with former agency head William Ruckelshaus' statement about citizen involvement in EPA decisions: "The right to be heard is not the same thing as the right to be heeded."

Ted Smith, a lawyer and National Toxics Campaign organizer in the Silicon Valley region near San Francisco, waded through EPA paperwork for more than a year to get a TAG grant to study a Superfund site where IBM had dumped waste solvents used in making disc drives. The solvents have since spread out in a five-mile underground plume contaminating the groundwater under south San Jose. In September, after Smith's grant application was approved, the EPA dropped that site, along with 30 others, from the Superfund program into the weaker Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) toxic-waste cleanup program. Since RCRA does not allow residents to receive TAG money, the change theoretically disqualified Smith's grant applications.

In an interview shortly after the delisting, Crampton assured *In These Times* that Smith would get his grant anyway and repeated that vow to Smith later the same week. Smith's EPA regional office sent him a letter telling him to go ahead and hire consultants to study the IBM site while the EPA reviewed the grant, but as *In These Times* went to press, Smith still had not received the EPA's final confirmation that the grant money would be paid.

A possible reason for the EPA's unwillingness to confirm Smith's grant became evident in December. Smith obtained a copy of a sharply worded letter from the Santa Clara County Manufacturing Group to EPA Administrator Reilly. The October letter says in part, "We are greatly disturbed that the continued funding of TAGs and sites under RCRA sets a dangerous precedent."

"The EPA would have to bend their own rules to give us the grant, yet if they take it away from us they would get creamed by the press," Smith said. "But industry has said, 'Don't you dare give them this grant,' so we're kind of in limbo.... We're going ahead, but [the situation] doesn't give us much confidence."

In light of Smith's case, the EPA's new policy toward citizen involvement in toxic-waste cleanup seems more like damage control than authentic reform. The Reagan administration developed the idea of delisting toxic-waste sites from Superfund's NPL to the less notorious RCRA program as a way of rewarding polluters who were willing to clean up the sites on their own. The Bush

administration's willingness to pursue the policy is a bad omen.

The September delisting was especially bad news for the people who live near the Martin Marietta Aerospace Corp.'s toxic-waste site near Denver. The EPA dropped Martin Marietta's 5,400-acre facility from the superfund program into RCRA. At the same time the EPA listed a 450-acre portion of Martin Marietta's land that had been leased to the U.S. Air Force as a separate Superfund site.

Adrienne Anderson, western director for the NTC, says the group has assembled 30 years of documents showing that first the Colorado government and then the EPA knew the site was polluting the drinking-water supply for the nearby suburb of Friendly Hills. The residents of Friendly Hills believe that before the NTC helped close the water supply in 1985 the chemicals killed 16 children and doubled the local childhood cancer rate.

At the time of the delisting of the Martin Marietta Superfund site, the Friendly Hills Health Action Group had notified EPA they would be applying for a TAG grant. But now the Friendly Hills residents can't receive any TAG money, though the NTC has applied for a grant to study the new 450-acre air force Superfund site. Interestingly, none of the 91 illegal pollution outflows the NTC has evidence of on the Martin Marietta land is on the new Superfund site.

"It's a sweetheart deal," Anderson says, adding that the Region 8 EPA office also claims it misplaced the results of a community health survey that the Friendly Hills residents had submitted to the agency.

Bill Walsh, a Greenpeace lobbyist who was interviewed by the EPA team that researched community involvement at Superfund sites for the 90-day review, says the EPA's new community-outreach effort will probably remain a glorified public-relations program. "[The EPA] talked in terms of community relations—look at all the brochures we provide—but ask them about bringing community groups to the table to find out where you are going to sample and the concept is totally alien to them," Walsh says. "The EPA treats citizens as they treat polluters, just another interest group trying to get them to go their way."

But there's a big difference. The EPA's new Superfund plan will let the polluters conduct the toxic-waste site studies and cleanup operations. This inherent conflict of interest is at the heart of Reilly and Bush's Superfund strategy.

Let's make a deal: The first steps of each Superfund cleanup are two interlinked studies called the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS). Under the new enforcement-first approach, the corporations that cooperate with the EPA will conduct these studies. It's almost as if the EPA is telling the polluters that if they will just plead guilty they can write their own pre-sentencing reports.

Walsh believes polluters should never be allowed to do RI/FSs because they too often choose the wrong places to sample soil and water to detect pollution. He told about the Akwesasne Mohawk Reservation Superfund site in upstate New York, where the Mohawks had Cornell University visiting professor Stephen M. Penningroth review an RI/FS prepared by the polluter, General Motors. That review concluded that GM's remedial investigation did not apply standard scientific procedure by failing to take enough samples

to determine how badly the site was contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins.

"This failure has resulted in the continuing endangerment of the neighboring community of Mohawk Indians," read a statement Penningroth released with his results. He went on to say, "The failure of the remedial investigation is not primarily a failure of laboratory equipment or computers.... [It] is analogous to a lawyer not following elementary rules of evidence in the courtroom or a physician not performing an adequate physical examination when a sick person comes to him for help."

With the help of Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-NY), the Mohawks forced the EPA to reopen the site study, but much time, energy and money could have been saved by funding the Mohawks to hire engineers to do the RI/FS in the first place.

At the Tacoma Tar Pits Superfund site in Washington state, the EPA used an RI/FS conducted by the polluters to justify leaving unknown amounts of benzene, toluene, lead, arsenic, mercury and other toxics at the site. The EPA's support of that decision was based partially on the fact that the poisons only sometimes polluted groundwater to dangerous levels.

What must be done

"Sometimes the best is the enemy of the good," Lew Crampton said when the risks of the EPA's new enforcement-first Superfund strategy were suggested to him. Crampton had a point. There's no time to look for perfection. Something must be done to improve the Superfund program, or by the early part of the next century drinking water from wells in many communities will be one of those forgotten customs grandparents reminisce about at holiday gatherings.

The October report on Superfund by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) seems to offer the best available ideas for correcting the Superfund problem that most concerns environmentalists: the EPA's excessive flexibility in letting polluters influence cleanup decisions. Here are some of the OTA's suggestions:

- Limit polluters to implementing, not selecting, cleanup remedies;
- Reject the EPA's current cost-benefit analysis-based cleanup-selection scheme and instead focus first on finding the best cleanup plan at a site, and then calculate the costs of the cleanup;
- Reauthorize Superfund for 10 years and investigate the possibility of making it independent of the EPA.

The OTA report discusses a total of 38 new policy options for the Superfund program. To make these ideas available to the environmental community, Joel Hirschhorn, the OTA Superfund project director, has reserved a limited supply of free copies of *Coming Clean* (normally \$10) for *In These Times* readers. These can be obtained by writing to Chris Clary, Industry Technology and Employment Program, Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C. 20003. Mention *In These Times* with your request. Copies of the EPA's *Management Review of the Superfund Program* (the 90-day review) are available from regional EPA offices.

—W.K.B.

These two examples show what can happen when the EPA trusts polluters to reveal how much pollution must be cleaned up. As P.H. Haller wrote in the industry journal *Hazardous Materials*, "Participation in the [RI/FS] study provides an opportunity to generate information that can sway EPA decisionmakers on important issues.... A company that uses its experts to argue convincingly in favor of one conclusion often can influence the ultimate decision."

Even though, like a war on drugs, an enforcement-first Superfund sounds tough, it actually gives control of the Superfund program to the most sophisticated polluters who are most willing to work with the EPA. Crampton called them the progressive PRP—Potentially Responsible Party, Superfund jargon for polluter—community. These are the companies that want to work with the EPA to move Superfund ahead.

And it is moving. The EPA spent nearly twice as much on cleanups in 1988 as in 1986. The SARA reforms' most recent quotas for cleanup starts have been met. Crampton notes that the EPA plans to hire 500 new employees in the next two years and says almost all of them will be out where the "rubber meets the road," conducting enforcement actions to start cleanups and overseeing the polluters' actions.

Environmental plea bargain: Crampton says many of the companies responsible for polluting the Superfund sites support the new strategy, because a primary EPA objective will be to find more "flexible and creative" ways of applying the concept of joint and several liability, the legal principle that lets the EPA sue any single polluter for all the pollution at a given site.

The richest polluters, Crampton says, feared the EPA would just dig into the deepest pockets and leave the larger polluters responsible for rounding up the smaller companies, landfill owners or trucking companies that might also be liable for damages at each Superfund site. "I can understand where industry has trepidation, and I can sympathize with them.... But if we go forward in a spirit of cooperation with industry ... I think we can allay those fears and get the job done," Crampton says.

Henry Cole, a scientist with Clean Water Action, fears this cooperative spirit will result in the EPA and industry negotiating cleanup settlements—the Superfund equivalent of plea bargaining—for hundreds of substandard cleanups that will protect corporate bank accounts instead of public health. He agrees that the new strategy has potential, but he warns, "The sneaky thing is [EPA] language implying, 'We're going to give PRPs more opportunity. We're going to be more flexible, more cooperative with them.' The focus will not be on true enforcement—the real focus is on [negotiating] settlements, which is a different process."

Cole grants that the EPA will probably crack down on companies that try to evade the new program. "The EPA has no problem punishing a few recalcitrants," he says, "but they are going to give these companies every opportunity to get away cheap. If that's enforcement, I'm pretty skeptical."

So is Joel Hirschhorn. Hirschhorn has directed the Superfund study of the congressional Office of Technology Assessments (OTA) for five years. In October Hirschhorn's project released a book-length report on the Superfund program called *Coming Clean*. The OTA examined 1988 cleanup decisions and found that 75 percent of the cases in which

the EPA approved the cheapest, least-protective cleanup option—burying toxics in landfills—the sites were enforcement-first. The OTA concluded that polluters might eventually save as much as \$1 billion through the cheaper cleanup plans the EPA allowed at the 1988 enforcement-first sites.

Human health vs. cleanup cost: "Superfund is not a cost-saving mechanism. It is a health-protection mechanism.... This is not a program that is intended to be a bargain hunter's paradise for the simple reason that cleaning up contaminated groundwater that people drink is not cheap." Those comments, by Sen. George Mitchell (D-ME) during the 1986 legislative tussle that produced the SARA Superfund reforms, are hardly subject to misinterpretation. They represent the majority opinion of Congress when the law was drafted. But since then, the EPA has subverted Congress' intent by making it possible for regional agency officials to weigh polluters' costs against human and environmental health

in order to disqualify cleanup plans that provide permanent protection from toxics.

These cost-benefit analyses take place after the RIFs have been completed—in what is called the remedy-selection process. The Sierra Club's analysis of this process shows that the cost of a proposed cleanup crops up twice in EPA evaluations. The EPA first uses the estimated costs of various cleanup methods to winnow the proposed remedies down to the cheapest possibilities. Then the remaining options are evaluated under nine EPA-developed criteria for making final cleanup selections.

But cleanup cost is also one of these nine criteria. Only after the proposed cleanup has twice cleared this cost-benefit hurdle does the EPA calculate the health-protection goals the cleanup will meet.

"Since SARA was enacted, the EPA has used cost effectiveness as the primary justification for a series of decisions that ignore or overlook health-based standards. Cost effectiveness has formed the basis not just for eliminating acceptable remedies but for defining before the fact what is acceptable," the Sierra Club commented in 1988.

The times they aren't a-changing: The Bayou Sorrel Superfund site in Louisiana is one of the dozens of sites where environmentalists believe the EPA misapplied these cost considerations. The 1 million cubic feet of toxic waste at Bayou Sorrel is periodically flooded by two rivers. But the EPA decided that putting a clay cap over the site was the cost-effective solution. Testifying before Congress, Sierra Club attorney Blake Early compared that decision to opening an umbrella to keep the rain off while standing in

a swimming pool.

Now the old EPA strategy appears likely to slip past in the flurry of backslapping over Reilly's new "get tough" policy. "The [90-day review] task group believes that additional experience with the [nine cleanup] criteria, coupled with implementation of the recommendations made in this report, will result in real improvements in remedy-selection decisions," the review stated.

But a close reading reveals the report's optimism is unjustified. Though there are several positive initiatives in the 90-day review that will promote consistency in Superfund cleanups and provide support for the EPA's typically overworked, inexperienced cleanup managers, if in practice the cost a polluter is willing to pay for a cleanup remains more important than human health or protection of the environment, the accelerated pace of cleanups Bush and Reilly's Superfund program promises is ominous, unwelcome news.

As if to underline this problem, while Reilly,

was telling Congress that the EPA will make polluters pay for Superfund cleanups, the agency went to federal District Court in Michigan last summer to defend its right to let polluters off the hook if the corporations complained about the cost of a cleanup.

That case involved the Rose Township Superfund site in rural Michigan. Twelve corporations, including Ford, GM and Chrysler, had dumped toxics at the site. The EPA's original cleanup plan had called for incineration of 50,000 pounds of contaminated soil. But the polluters refused to pay for the incineration. Rather than fight the corporations, the EPA reversed itself and approved a soil-flushing plan that had been specifically ruled out by the EPA's earlier analysis of soil conditions at the site. The state of Michigan entered the case in hopes of restoring the original cleanup plan, but in early August U.S. District Judge George E. Woods ruled the EPA had the right to permit the cheaper cleanup.

Despite actions that have cast doubt on the EPA's intentions, Crampton hopes the

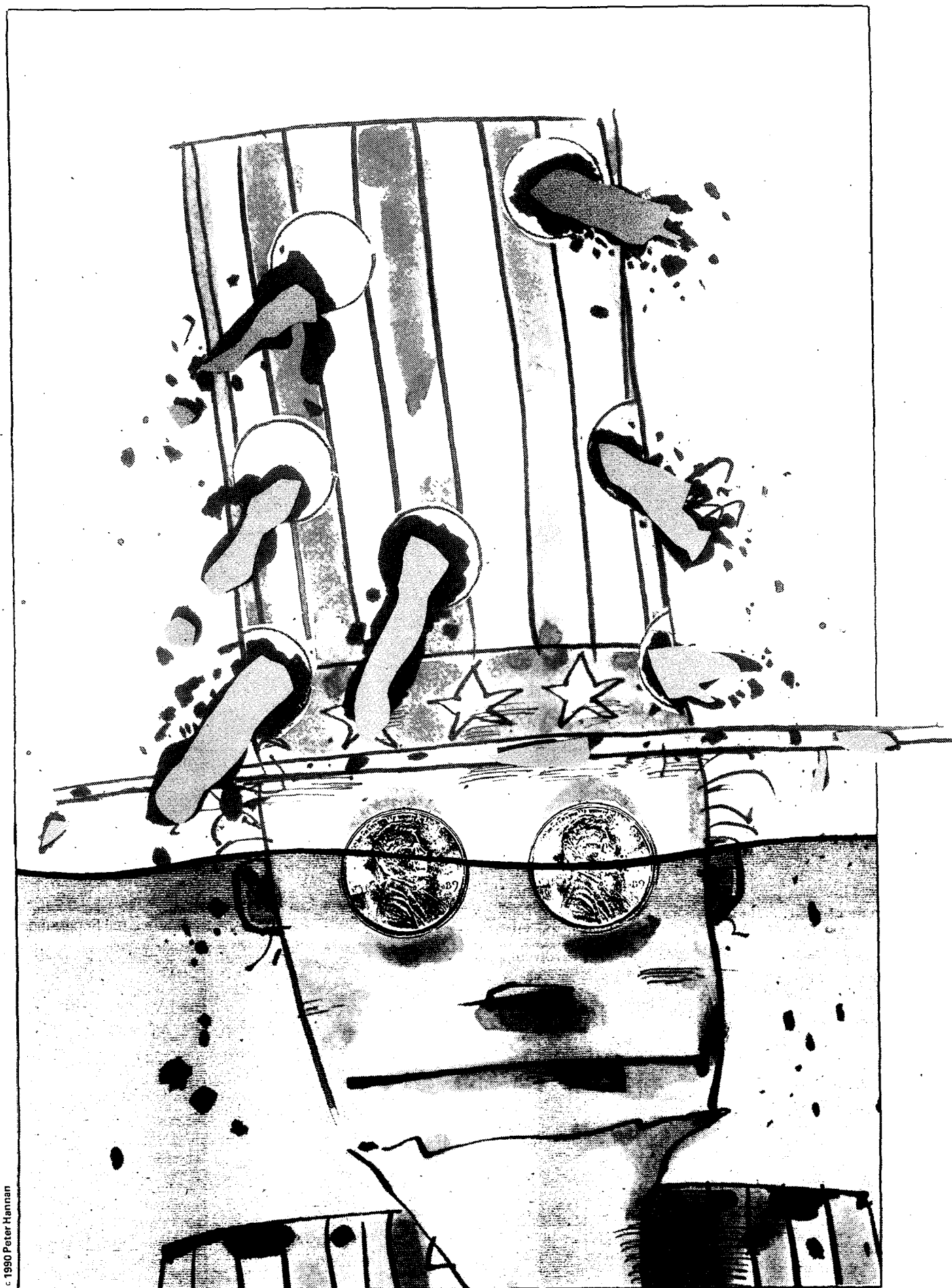
increasingly sophisticated and well-organized community toxics network, the local groups brought together by the National Toxics Campaign and the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, will see the Superfund program changes as an opportunity and try to work with the EPA.

"I would like to ask people to give us the benefit of the doubt. If we are smart about it, we will be able to adjust our activity as we go, albeit slowly because [Superfund] is a huge supertanker afloat on a very stormy sea.... [In These Times] is an advocacy publication, and we need that kind of support if we are going to succeed," Crampton said.

It's flattering to feel needed. But the EPA is poised to hand Superfund's helm over to the most cooperative—and richest—polluters. That is not the kind of reform the program needs.

William K. Burke writes regularly for *In These Times* about environmental issues. Research for this article was funded by a grant from The Fund for Investigative Journalism, Inc.

IN THESE TIMES JANUARY 10-16, 1990 13



EDITORIAL



An atavistic Bush administration returns to the bad old days

None of the excuses the Bush administration has given for its invasion of Panama are valid. The canal was in no danger. American lives were not threatened—at least not until the administration ordered a series of provocations that led to the death of a Marine when he was in a restricted area of Panama City. And Manuel Noriega, though a corrupt petty tyrant, represented no threat to the United States, nor is there any evidence that he has recently been engaged in drug trafficking. True, Noriega stole the election in Panama last year. But Carlos Salinas de Gortari also stole the Mexican election last year—from Cuauhtemoc Cardenas—and the administration and the U.S. media seemed barely to notice it.

Of course, Bush was feeling the pressure to do something dramatic. Leading Democrats in and out of Congress beat the war drums and implied that Bush was a wimp for not sending in the Marines (see story on page 6). But that hardly justifies the invasion, nor is it sufficient reason for the administration to risk the international con-

demnation and disdain that were sure to follow such an act. That condemnation was strong. Every Latin American country, except for the U.S. puppet regime in El Salvador, either condemned or deplored the invasion, but, like the stealing of the Mexican presidential election, this was downplayed by our corporate media.

Even so, the price the United States will pay in terms of international prestige and respect will be high. Could there, then, be some other reason, something that the administration has suppressed and the media have chosen to ignore?

The answer to that question lies in the changing relationship of Noriega and the United States. In his early years in power, Noriega was on the CIA payroll. He was one of the Reagan administration's more trusted "allies," and if he was engaged in drug running, it was as part of the CIA's secret financing of the contra war with drug money (see *In These Times*, April 15, 1987). But by late 1985, for reasons unknown, Noriega tired of his role as Reagan retainer. And when then-National Security Adviser John Poindexter demanded that Panama become, in Noriega's words, "the point of the lance" in Reagan's war against Nicaragua, Noriega refused. At that point Poindexter allegedly let him know that he was being cut loose. For Noriega, it was the beginning of the end.

Starting in 1986, a propaganda campaign began to paint Noriega as a central figure in international drug running. A little over a year later, in 1987, he was indicted in Miami. And in 1988 the Reagan administration launched a financial war against Panama. It froze the assets of the National Bank of Panama in an effort to make it impossible for the country to settle international accounts. It stopped turning over tolls collected for passage through the canal and the taxes collected from Panamanians, and it forced U.S. corporations to do the same by threatening their CEOs with criminal sanctions if they refused. The administration declared that ships of Panamanian registry would no longer be allowed to call at U.S. ports. All of this, of course, contributed to discontent with Noriega among middle-class Panamanians, even while it strengthened his support among those who had less to lose.

While this was going on, Panama was playing a crucial role in the survival of the Nicaraguan economy. The Noriega government served as a major intermediary for Nicaragua's evasion of U.S. trade restrictions and provided access to a broad range of American-made goods and spare parts. In an economy as tenuous as Nicaragua's after almost a decade of the contra war, this relationship has been vital for the Sandinistas. As the *New York Times* noted two weeks ago, the threat of a change in Panama's economic relations has had special impact on Nicaragua, where even short-term economic setbacks could have important implications for the outcome of the February 28 national elections.

For the Bush administration, the threat of a stable Sandinista government is more important than the superficial issues proclaimed to justify Noriega's capture. The example of a Central American nation genuinely independent of U.S. corporate capital—one that could provide a stable alternative to the ersatz democracies of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras—is a much more profound threat to post-Cold War neocolonialism... or so the Bush administration seems to believe. In our view, this is the most important of the several motives behind the invasion. Like the others, it is unworthy of a nation that purports to be a world leader in the quest for peace and democracy.

An unprecedented event in Czechoslovakia

A little more than a year ago, on the 20th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia that ended Alexander Dubcek's experiment in "socialism with a human face," 10,000 demonstrators in Prague chanted "Dubcek, Dubcek" before they were cleared away by the security police. In an interview published a week later in *In These Times* (Aug. 31, 1988) Dubcek, the former secretary of the Czech Communist Party and the principal architect of the "Prague Spring" of 1968, talked about his expulsion from the party and his years of internal exile. "The wound has not healed," he said. "My life has been like that of a prisoner with limited freedoms. I was made to understand that I was on the 'periphery' of society, in its margins. I have worked as a mechanic in a logging camp and also in an office. I have read literature and politics."

But during those 20 years Dubcek didn't lose faith in the Czech people. "I hope that someday political honor will be restored to me and to many others," he said. "My hope comes from the justness of

our convictions—the need to stimulate economic reform, combine democracy and socialism, define mechanisms that promote open interaction between the party and our people." This was no abstract wish. Dubcek insisted. It came, he explained, from a conviction that his ideas had been validated by subsequent events, and from his certainty that "the desire for political renovation is alive in our people," that it "lives on in the popular consciousness." That desire for democracy, he concluded, "needs to be given adequate shape."

Two weeks ago Dubcek got his wish when, as part of the new coalition government, he was unanimously elected as chairman of Czechoslovakia's national parliament. Seeing this as "a sort of continuation of the Prague Spring of 1968 and a certain moral vindication for the hundreds of thousands of its active participants," he promised that his country "will become a place where the people's wishes will come true and their rights will be respected."

Of all the recent revolutions in Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia's is unique in having a living leader of its Communist past who represents the ideals of a post-Communist society. If Imre Nagy had survived the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, he might today be in a similar position there. As it is, Dubcek stands alone as a Communist leader genuinely revered by his people.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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LETTERS

Double trouble

THE TITLE OF SALIM MUWAKKIL'S ARTICLE, "DO Muslims' accomplishments excuse their racist rhetoric?" (ITT, Dec. 13, 1989), can be understood in two ways, and each is enormously troubling.

The first is the suggestion that the Nation of Islam (NOI) is less deserving of criticism for its racism or anti-Semitism because it is also saving certain neighborhoods from drugs. This is incoherent. NOI deserves praise for the lives it saves, but if racism and anti-Semitism are evil, they do not become less so because racists and anti-Semites may also do good works. I would not say, for example, that Thomas Jefferson's authorship of the Declaration of Independence "excused" his slave-owning.

The second is the possible implication that the NOI's racist rhetoric is excusable if it is, in fact, the instrument of good works—that is, that the NOI should not be held in opprobrium for its anti-Semitism if anti-Semitism helps establish the stance of "uncompromising leadership" that Muwakkil tells us is successfully "designed to attract the disillusioned." That suggestion is terrifying. The analogous thought that Hitler's anti-Semitism was less poisonous to the extent that it may have been instrumental in helping Germany to revive its economy after World War I would strike most people as monstrous.

I also find strange Muwakkil's statement: "Farrakhan's problems with Jewish leaders are more a legacy of his involvement with Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign, where tensions between segments of the two communities reached a boiling point, than a specific doctrinal animus toward Jews." Farrakhan's problems increased when, because of Jackson's campaign, his views became more widely broadcast. But Farrakhan's problems stem from his views, not from Jackson's campaign. Calling Judaism a "gutter religion" may reflect something other than "doctrinal animus," whatever that is, but the view is a vile one. Jackson has nothing to do with it.

Peter M. Shane
Iowa City, Iowa

Analogous?

SALIM MUWAKKIL (ITT, DEC. 13, 1989) SEEMS TO agree with those who see the Nation of Islam as respectable, despite its racism, because it combats drug dealing, is seen in its communities as "an oasis in the midst of despair," and has popular support in its communities.

Gee. By these standards, the Ku Klux Klan, which is already popular in its community, where it is seen as an oasis of hope, needs only to start beating up drug dealers to win *In These Times'* approval.

Dan Freeman
Berkeley, Calif.

Sick logic

I COULD NOT BELIEVE MY EYES ON READING AN ARTICLE in *In These Times* (Dec. 13, 1989) that says "If it takes a little racist rhetoric to effect such a welcome metamorphosis, the tradeoff is worth it." That is a quote of Salim Muwakkil in regard to curing inner-city ills.

The last time hate was lauded—the end

justifying the means—was in Hitler's Germany, when German "pride" was bolstered by belittling, hating and then murdering Jews.

We paid dearly for the results of that sick logic. No one needs to tear down another to realize one's own dignity and worth.

Esther Geoffrey
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Salim Muwakkil replies: The intent of my article was:

- to note that Louis Farrakhan was becoming a very popular figure—especially among black youth—despite the public opprobrium with which he is held. And to examine possible reasons for this development.

- to point out that the late Elijah Muhammad's program of social rehabilitation, though self-avowedly racist, has been lauded by a variety of people—including the late Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago. And that Farrakhan, who has been similarly lauded by the D.C. City Council, has no doctrinal differences with his late mentor.

To paraphrase Sonny Carson, the Brooklyn activist who was hired and fired by the David Dinkins campaign: Farrakhan's NOI is not just anti-Semitic; it's anti-white. The NOI doctrine posits black supremacy and deems whites genetically defective, and my article is certainly not an apologia for that kind of primitive racism. However, to assume that I endorse a view merely because I explain why others find it attractive is an assumption I had assumed our readers had outgrown.

Confirmation

JAMES WEINSTEIN'S ARTICLE CONCERNING THE current state of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and its future direction (ITT, Dec. 6, 1989) was on target. I joined the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) in 1978 and, like many others, I experienced a genuine excitement for the possibilities for DSA when it was organized in 1982. It was my hope that DSA would establish a national presence coupled with a strong chapter base at the local level.

When financial troubles forced the organization to close its Midwest and West Coast national branch offices, most chapters were put in a position to fend for themselves. Communications suffered, chapters were neglected and the national office in New York returned to the DSOC strategy of building progressive coalitions with the Democratic Party at the national level. The potential for the organization was wasted when a national focus and strategy was pur-

sued at the expense of the chapter base.

I, for one, did not leave DSA because I'd become disillusioned with being a democratic socialist in the reactionary Reagan era. I left because I saw little hope for success in DSA's political strategy. Frankly, hanging on the coattails of whatever neoliberal happened to let us hang around didn't make much sense to me. For me, working within the Democratic Party made sense only if we were to work toward building our own constituency and, where possible, running our own candidates.

When DSA opts to change its present course and adopts a political strategy that will build the organization starting at the local level, I will be among those first in line to pay my dues, with my shirtsleeves rolled up, ready to get to work.

Wilford Smith
Bothell, Wash.

Competence

IN THESE TIMES IS, NOMINALLY AT LEAST, A socialist newspaper. It seems reasonable to expect competence when your editorialist makes his semiannual reference to the views of Karl Marx.

Your editorial, "Communism's collapse is not necessarily capitalism's triumph" (Dec. 13, 1989), although generally on the mark in its analysis, is case in point.

Your editorialist characterizes Marx' view of socialism as "a process that would extend the limited political democracy already achieved—in countries like Germany, Britain and the United States—to the broader social realm of each nation's economy." The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, "turned Marx on his head. Russia was the most backward and least developed major capitalist country, not the most advanced."

While it is undeniable that Russia was one of the most backward nations of Europe, it does not logically follow that Marx dismissed the revolutionary possibilities of that country. Far from becoming obsessed with Germany, England, the U.S. and other "advanced" countries, as your editorialist implies, Marx spent the last years of his life learning the Russian language and reading Chernyshevskii and others on Russian conditions and revolutionary possibilities.

There can be little doubt to anyone actually taking the time to read Marx that the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 would have been welcomed by him just as the Paris Commune of 1871 was welcomed. (See Teodor Shanin's *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, \$10 from Monthly Review Press, for additional details.)

The tragedy of this century is not that the Bolsheviks succeeded in gaining state

power; it is that the radicals of Germany, Britain and, yes, the U.S. failed. With massive support not forthcoming from the "advanced" nations, things rapidly got ugly in the Russian revolutionary republic.

But that was a long time ago.

Tim Davenport
Corvallis, Ore.

Editor's note: Yes—I'm tempted to say, of course—Marx played with the idea that a revolution might occur first in Russia, but that does not negate his belief that a developed capitalism was a necessary prerequisite for socialism. In fact, Lenin himself insisted after the Bolsheviks had seized power that the revolution could succeed in Russia only if it spread to the West, where there was an advanced working class. When that happened, Lenin wrote, the leadership of the world socialist movement would revert back to the German working class, where it belonged. It was this belief, shared by all the original Bolsheviks, that led to the formation of the Third International and the breakup of most socialist parties in Europe and the United States.

Atonement

I ENJOYED MOST OF LAWRENCE BUSH'S PASSIONATE account of the lives of Paul Novick, the *Morgn Freiheit* and Bush's Aunt Bessie (ITT, Dec. 6, 1989). But near the end Bush lapses into sentimental incoherency by comparing Novick to John Lennon and Sholom Aleichem.

To compare Novick to Sholom Aleichem is foolish. Lennon has already been murdered once. To compare him to a man who apologized for Stalin's terrors at their height is absurd. Artists and political journalists are distant relatives—not close family.

Novick atoned for his years of devotion to Stalin's slave labor world, but if he had been more effective in his heyday, his "odd-ball" politics would have been a more serious matter. Artists who are dreamers create works of art; politicians who are dreamers may create hells on earth. So let's not get carried away.

Unlike Novick, Lennon had nothing to atone for.

David Evanier
New York

Editor's note: Please keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

SYLVIA



By Sherri Levine and
Patrick Lacefield

Politics only one aspect of DSA's coalitional work

IT WAS GOOD TO HAVE JAMES WEINSTEIN at our Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) convention in Baltimore, Md., Nov. 10-12, 1989. For all the words about the genuinely upbeat and determined nature of the gathering (*In These Times*, Dec. 6, 1989), even Weinstein didn't get things quite right.

First for the inaccuracies. Weinstein asserts that DSA's concern about our relationship with Sen. Ted Kennedy has shaped our stand on a national health-care program. Not only have we consistently been on record in support of Rep. Ronald Dellums' (D-CA) health-care proposal, but one of the most recent times we covered the issue—in an article in *Democratic Left*—Vincent Navarro criticized the move toward employee-based health insurance.

Weinstein goes on to announce that we have concentrated our energies on presidential politics. If he calls an endorsement of "critical support" for Michael Dukakis "concentrating our energies," then we have a different definition of the word. We did do more when it came to Jackson's run for the Democratic Party nomination in 1988, and we are proud of our involvement—nationally and locally—in the multiracial, multiclass, progressive coalition. Jackson's politics in the 1988 primaries were social democratic in nature, and we were deeply involved in mobilizing support for his campaign and program.

In Weinstein's haste to criticize DSA, he

omitted some of the unique aspects of the organization and exposed his lack of understanding of what it takes to build a democratic socialist organization in the U.S.

First of all, we are multigenerational. With more than 2,000 campus-based activists and more than 40 campus chapters, the DSA youth section is the largest multi-issue radical student organization in the country. That means that DSA is helping to train the next generation of socialists and activists. If *In These Times* is going to speak to and be heard by this next generation of activists, it is going to have to paint a more accurate picture of DSA.

We are also a member party of the Socialist International (SI), the international coalition of labor, social democratic and democratic socialist organizations. Through the SI, we help to spread the word domestically of the worldwide struggles for democracy and freedom, whether in Central America, South Africa or Eastern Europe. And we are the only non-union group of any significance in the U.S. that makes labor support work a priority, because we recognize the importance of a strong labor movement to any successful effort to build a majoritarian left in the U.S.

The name game: Weinstein criticizes what he describes as our overattention to

attracting prominent officials. Although having prominent officials as members does help to legitimize our politics to liberal and mainstream Americans, we have not concentrated our attention on courting them. Weinstein poses it as an either/or, with prominent officials and national events on the one side and locals and community activists on the other. What he does not realize is that having prominent officials as members of DSA helps our members to recruit for the organization (ask anyone who has recently recruited a friend or co-worker to DSA), and organizing national events provides the organizational visibility and framework that helps locals organize in their communities.

Focusing on running only explicitly socialist candidates is too narrow a strategy for DSA.

One of our most successful recent events was Justice for All, a nationally coordinated day of awareness of poverty that provided the framework for our locals to organize around poverty and economic injustice in

their communities. And our nationally organized tours of prominent international spokespeople brings people like Salvadoran opposition leader Ruben Zamora to cities and towns across the country, thereby supporting the important Central America work in which our folks are already involved on the local level. *In These Times* is an invaluable newspaper of the democratic left, but running a newspaper is different from building a socialist organization in America.

That Weinstein can write an entire article about DSA's activities over the past years without mentioning the Reagan era and the conservative decade of the '80s is surprising. The "L word" is under attack and Weinstein wants DSA to be focusing all of its energies on training, developing and running explicitly socialist candidates! Electoral politics is important, but it is only one part of DSA's coalitional work. And given the U.S.' political terrain, most of that coalitional work will inevitably go to supporting non-socialist candidates. That's why Weinstein's singular focus on "electoral is only worthwhile if it's for an explicitly socialist candidate" is too narrow a strategy for DSA.

DSA already is a vital component of the American left. We fill a unique space as an organization that promotes democratic socialist alternatives, ideas and ideals, while working to help build a progressive majority in America. The historic changes throughout Europe make a democratic socialist voice in the U.S. even more imperative.

We have seen an upswing in membership

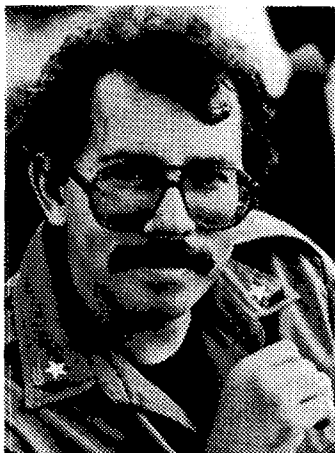
Friends of the Frente A Grassroots Effort for Nicaragua's Election

George Bush and the U.S. Congress Don't Speak for All of Us!

After 10 years of military attacks and economic war on Nicaragua, the United States is now spending over \$17 million to try to buy the Nicaraguan election to be held February 25. We believe it should be up to the peoples of Central America to decide who should govern—not U.S. guns or dollars.

Join a grassroots campaign by United States citizens to raise money to support the Sandinistas. If you support land reform, free healthcare and literacy — you support the Sandinistas. The Sandinistas are the party that implemented all of these programs — without them these programs will not exist.

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and the organization has been as visible as ever this past year, even without Michael Harrington. Mike's death was a personal loss to many and a political loss to all. But the organization is as committed and prepared as ever to continue the struggle of building a democratic socialist organization in the U.S. A speaking tour of East European reformers is only one of the events currently in the works.

The challenge for DSA is to continue to reach out and to grow so that, together with others on the democratic left, we stand an even better chance of turning this country around. If you are interested in working for change, why not join DSA? ■

Sherri Levine and **Patrick Lacefield** are officers in DSA's national organization. Levine is publications and political education director; Lacefield is organizational director.

A vital political force needs both a vision and a constituency

By James Weinstein

IT'S GOOD TO BE TOLD ABOUT THE various things the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is doing. These are worthwhile activities, but they do not suffice to make DSA a vital part of the American left, much less of the American political scene. Its present existence as an organization of a few thousand people scattered across the country, engaged primarily in following other people's initiatives, makes it marginal rather than vital. To become a real political force, DSA will need its own constituency—a popular following ready to support its activities and leaders—and to elect representatives capable of translating its principles into practical legislative programs.

In years past, Michael Harrington gave DSA, and the idea of socialism, a degree of popular recognition. His intellectual work had a palpable impact, as did his abilities as a speaker and tireless campaigner for DSA. But Harrington's background was in the Catholic Worker and tiny sects led by Max Schachtman that prided themselves on the power of their ideas or "vanguard" role, without ever seriously considering building a popular constituency. His loss deprives the organization of his strength but also leaves it saddled with that weakness.

I went to the convention to see how DSA was planning to adjust to this new situation. I was in no haste to criticize DSA. Far from it: I want DSA to give some direction to what is now a leaderless American left. But although the spirit of the convention gave some cause for hope, there were few signs

that the changes needed to achieve that end were on DSA's agenda.

The playing field: There is a political crisis in this country. The Reagan years are over but the Reaganites are still in office, desperately trying to retain their popular mandate in the face of the loss of their most cherished shibboleths. Despite the opportunities in this new situation, leaders of the Democratic Party offer no real challenge to Republican power. They, too, are morally and politically bankrupt—almost totally subservient to their corporate funders and thus unable to oppose administration policies on the basis of a different set of social priorities.

That is why I suggested the need for DSA—if it is to play the role to which it aspires—to develop a range of legislative programs that embody socialist principles and a vision of a more humane and democratic society, and why I suggested, as a modest beginning, the need to work closely with its locals, "coordinating activities, organizing issue conferences and training people involved in running local election campaigns."

Lost in translation: This got translated in Levine and Lacefield's reply into a made-up quotation about a "singular focus" in which electoral activity "is only worthwhile if it's for an explicitly socialist candidate." I, of course, did not write that, or imply it. I did imply that only through direct involvement in electoral activity, starting on the local legislative level, would it be possible for DSA to learn how to apply its general principles to politics as the American peo-

ple understand the term. The theory behind this belief is that political ideas can be developed and tested only when there is a concrete need for them, which in this case means in the contest for office and the enactment of legislation.

Levine and Lacefield did not address my suggestions or the underlying ideas, but in summarizing DSA's activities they did inadvertently validate my criticisms. Note, for example, that they write almost exclusively about supporting other people's initiatives. Thus, DSA is "on record in support" of Ron Dellums' health-care proposal. It gave "critical support" to Dukakis, but active support to Jesse Jackson's primary campaign. "Labor support work" is "a priority," and the national office has been involved in "supporting" Central American work that DSA chapters are also supporting on the local level.

These are all parts of the "hundred and one things" that I quoted Irving Howe as having said "a socialist should be doing." But as Howe implied, all these activities are taking place and would take place even if DSA didn't exist. And DSA, with only a handful of members in any one place, makes little difference when it supports such activities—except helping itself by becoming identified with larger and vital single-issue movements or organizations.

Yet DSA does have a potentially unique role to play precisely because it is not a single-issue or single-purpose organization. In the political arena, single-issue groups—environmental, trade union, women's rights, health care, affordable housing, etc.—are limited to functioning as pressure groups for their particular interests. To be effective they must bring pressure on the widest possible range of public officials, regardless of the officials' general political views and commitments. By their nature such groups cannot aspire to the creation of a new left hegemony, even though their particular activities may contribute to that process. On the other hand, DSA not only can but must have that as its long-range goal. Otherwise why would DSA call itself socialist?

Timidity's riposte: I can hear Levine and Lacefield's response to that question: "Even the 'L word' is under attack, and we're so small and weak, how can we act on our

long-range goals?" And, indeed, if my focus were what Levine and Lacefield say it is, they'd be right in dismissing my suggestions. But the argument I made escaped them.

So I'll try again: DSA prides itself on what it calls its "coalition work." Coalitions are fine, but when DSA enters them it is almost always to support positions and activities determined by the other members of the coalition. This is true because DSA brings neither large numbers of people nor great organizational resources with them. On the national level DSA is simply too small. So, more often than not, the organization must operate within the framework of other people's ideas and immediate programs. In such situations there is little real need for DSA to develop specific programs or legislative proposals based on their principles, and, therefore, not much need for them to function as political intellectuals. DSA has spent a good deal of time deciding what positions to take on various issues and which liberal or single-issue groups or candidates to support, but these decisions have no meaning outside their ranks.

Meanwhile, on the local level, where the electoral process is accessible even with the limited resources at DSA's command, chapters have generally been left on their own. True, most DSA locals do not have the resources to enter Democratic primaries with their own candidates, or even the confidence to try. But the national organization does have the capacity to help support, guide and encourage locals to take on such activity. And by doing so, it might begin to give real leadership to DSA chapters in becoming political forces in their communities, which in turn would begin to give DSA some political muscle in its national coalitions.

This is necessarily schematic, and therefore oversimplified—and it surely will seem utopian to those DSA leaders whom Howe characterized in his convention speech as "hesitant, insufficiently ambitious ... and geared excessively to organizational routine." But I don't believe it is beyond DSA's present capabilities, and in any case if this or something like it is not done, I'm afraid DSA might, in Howe's words, "shriveled into a sect—a nice sect, but politically irrelevant." ■

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Liar's Poker: Rising Through the Wreckage of Salomon Brothers

By Michael Lewis
W.W. Norton & Company
249 pp., \$19.95

Circus of Ambition: The Culture of Wealth and Power in the Eighties

By John Taylor
Warner Books, 240 pp., \$19.95

By Annette Gordon-Reed

FOR ANYONE WHO STILL DOUBTS that the '80s was the decade of greed, further proof has arrived in the form of two new books: *Liar's Poker: Rising Through the Wreckage of Salomon Brothers*, by Michael Lewis, and *Circus of Ambition: The Culture of Wealth and Power in the Eighties*, by John Taylor. These authors have drawn complementary pictures of what Taylor refers to as the "money culture" of the '80s. The visions are at once humorous, pathetic and frightening.

Liar's Poker is an entertaining inside view of Wall Street. Lewis was a bond trader at Salomon Brothers during the early to middle part of the decade, when the investment house and the bond market were at their respective peaks. It was a time when, as the book jacket tells us, it was "wonderful to be young and working on Wall Street." I know something of this era, having begun my legal career working for a law firm and representing one of Salomon's more predatory competitors. It *did* feel good to make lots of money and experience the illusion of power. But we law associates were in a different class than the Lewises of the world because of investment banking's unparalleled ability to provide the kind of instant stardom that *Liar's Poker* describes.

Big stock policy: Lewis came to Salomon by a strange route. He graduated from Princeton with a major in art and did not get an MBA. Instead he went to study at the London School of Economics. While there, he met (and apparently impressed) the wife of a Salomon trader at a party for the queen mother. An interview was arranged, and soon after Lewis entered Salomon's trainee program in New York.

Whatever skills were required to succeed, Lewis must have possessed them, because within two years he became a "big swinging dick"—the sobriquet for the firm's truly big moneymakers. He made hundreds of millions of dollars for Salomon and was paid more than \$200,000 a year.

In the years that Lewis describes, investment bankers emerged from the shadows of gray-flannel-suitdom to become the pinup boys of the Reagan era, idolized and envied for the vast sums of money they made and, in many cases, for their startling youth. As with so many other phenomena of that era, there was an unreal and disquieting quality to the

story presented. Was it really a good thing that so many young people longed to spend their time this way? Despite some misgivings, the public generally could not resist believing the hype.

Lewis is at his best when deconstructing that hype. As insider turned informer, he strips away the myth of supercool professionalism to reveal a world of nervous overeaters (onion cheeseburgers for breakfast), puerile practical jokers and 24-year-olds who "blow up" customers (Lewis' euphemism for causing clients to lose millions of dollars).

The whole enterprise seems like an extremely expensive money game played by overgrown boys, and not extraordinarily gifted boys at that. They were, instead, extremely lucky, reaping the benefits of market conditions created by the U.S. Federal Reserve. The game having been rigged in their favor, all that was left was to strike the proper pose. Attitude, more than experience, counted.

The most important attitude was the one necessary to play liar's poker. "The code of the liar's poker player was like the code of the gunslinger. It required the player to accept all challenges," Lewis writes, describing the intensely macho and amoral atmosphere that prevailed. Obviously, having the attitude of a gunslinger is not necessarily a good thing. But Lewis, for all of his professed ambivalence about his own job experience and about investment banks in general, admires the gunslinger mentality.

Gunning for trouble: *Liar's Poker* supposedly traces a young man's journey through and out of a system whose values he cannot totally accept. But consider the way Lewis separates the story's heroes and villains. The reader is alerted to Lewis' disdain for John Gutfrund when Lewis recounts an anecdote disparaging Gutfrund's skills at playing liar's poker. The line from bad poker player to henpecked husband to duplicitous chairman of the board is drawn fairly straight. Gutfrund may be everything Lewis says, but it also says a great deal about the author that Gutfrund's failings would be signaled by his deficiencies as a "gunslinger."

Lewis' description of Salomon's training sessions for its new employees is also instructive. He divides the class into two groups, the "front-row" trainees, eager beavers who asked silly questions, and "back-row" trainees, "who treasured their pride" and sat "in the back row and hurl[ed] wads of paper at managing directors." Though he appears to criticize the back-row "hooligans," he recounts their antics in a way that makes them seem like harmless graduates of Animal House, and his writing never conveys the contempt for this group that is so apparent in his description of the front-row trainee losers.

New York stock boys shelved ethics in '80s



Donald Trump

The point is that a world divided into those who are gunslingers and those who are not, those who crawl and those who dominate, sounds very much like the world that Lewis says he wanted to escape. One cannot fault him for being so much like the people that he rightly castigates, as he did play the game with them and was one of the best at it. Still, Lewis' attitude is something to keep in mind when reading his book for signs that the "masters of the universe" are experiencing a real change in their outlook on life.

Circus of Ambition is a more direct meditation on the meaning of the '80s. According to Taylor, the central theme of the decade was "money is good." With all inhibitions about the open worship of money removed, a culture of greed and ruthlessness arose. Taylor uses portraits of individuals (two investment bankers, one of them John Gutfrund; an artist; and two Hollywood producers) and a description of a lavish social event to support his view.

Taylor's ideas are often original, even if the book sounds, in places, like a non-fictionalized version of *Bonfire of the Vanities* complete with Tom Wolfe's excited prose. Read Taylor on the glittering engagement party of a socialite couple held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "Other guests took it up [the shout to the bridegroom-to-be], and the walls of the museum rang with their jubilation. *Yahoo! Yahoo! Yahoo!* Oh, what a glorious time it was to be alive and rich in New York." For the most part, however, the author manages to produce his own, sometimes insightful, view of the past 10

years.

"Money," Taylor writes, "came to be regarded unabashedly as an emblem of accomplishment and prowess, and even, to some, a sign of God's blessing." How do people who think they've received God's blessing act? With a certainty and disregard for others that can be breathtaking. Taylor tells a story about the allegedly deliberate and unnecessary destruction of important artwork so that real-estate developer Donald Trump could begin work on Trump Plaza. Money and power created the arrogance that impelled the act, and money and power made any type of social opprobrium for this transgression unthinkable. The story captures the spirit of the times: the greed, the unrestrained use of power, the impatience, and the public acceptance of all three.

Postwar positivism: Taylor offers several reasons for how this spirit gained ascendancy, some more plausible than others. First, he finds a model for the '80s in the "Gilded Age" of the 1880s. Bull markets existed in both periods, and both periods saw the rise of flamboyant and powerful men of finance who were much in the public eye. During both eras the nation was overcoming the effects of a war and was ready to be optimistic about the future. Taylor believes that this yearning for optimism helped to create the excesses of the '80s.

Predictably, Taylor blames Jimmy Carter for making the nation feel so down that all it could do was wish to be up. Aside from the fact that Carter gets blamed for too much, the

equation of optimism with the sort of greed Taylor describes is curious. Optimism and selfishness are not the same. People might have been tired, but they were not just tired of President Carter's sermons about malaise. They were tired of hearing about civil rights. They were tired of hearing about the poor, of hearing about *other people's problems*. This impatience suggests not that Americans wanted to be optimistic about their lives but that they did not want to bother about other people's.

Taylor's comparison of Carl Icahn, T. Boone Pickens et al., to Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller and other early captains of industry is appropriate. Yet the robber barons

GREED

of the late 19th century, in the midst of all their thieving, did manage to build railroads, steel mills and other industries of value to the nation. The money men of our age created only paper wealth—highly leveraged paper wealth at that. Taylor provides no explanation for why this latter group found challenge in those types of activities rather than in envisioning a way to build or rebuild industries and make a profit by doing so.

Taylor is more interesting and original when he analyzes the psyche of young America during this period. But after making a valid point about the 33-and-under crowd, he drops the ball when drawing a conclusion from it. Young people like Charles Atkins, an investment banker whose rise and fall he chronicles, and Michael Lewis came of age during a period of great uncertainty. Unlike the '60s generation whose consciousness was formed by an abundant America, the baby investment bankers and baby art moguls described in the *Circus of Ambition* grew up in an era of assassination, oil crises, stagflation and declining American power abroad.

It is easy to be generous, selfless and even courageous when one doesn't know that the well can run dry. Scarcity, on the other hand, produces fear and selfishness, reactions that provide a more likely explanation for the mindsets of young people during the '80s than Taylor's persistent theme of optimism about the future. Young people were obsessed with money and profession not because they thought the future was going to be good but because they thought it would be bad and wanted to get theirs before it was all gone.

Circus of Ambition offers little hope for readers who are looking for some sign that the '90s will be different, as it ends with a prediction that the money culture has not yet run its course. Whether this is right or wrong, Taylor's book is a useful chronicle of a period that no one should forget, as much as one might like to.

Annette Gordon-Reed is a New York lawyer.

**Working-Class Americanism:
The Politics of Labor in a
Textile City, 1914-1960**
By Gary Gerstle
Cambridge University Press
356 pp., \$39.50

By Dana Frank

Reclaiming the high ground of Americanism

to melt their community.

Woonsocket wasn't exactly fertile ground for militant unionism. Yet two radical organizers, Joseph Schmetz and Lawrence Spits, were able to build a mass union movement in Woonsocket in the early '30s.

They began with a base among the city's most skilled workers, Franco-Belgian mule skinnners, and cast their appeal in terms of the promise of American life: by joining a union, French-Canadians could cast off their ethnic stigma and become true Americans. Through Americanist language, Woonsocket's immigrant workers could transcend ethnic identity with class identity.

It worked. By 1941 Woonsocket's union, the Independent Textile Union (ITU) had not only organized all the city's textile workers but had expanded to include locals in a range of trades throughout the city's hinterland.

The ITU was far more than just a traditional labor union. Services to members included a medical clinic, life insurance, a credit union, cooperative housing and a library. Ultimately it embodied a tiny version of the Belgian socialism within which union president Schmetz had come of age.

The key to Schmetz' success (and the union's) was casting working-

class or neosocialist ideals in the language of Americanism. "We want a declaration of independence," the union demanded, for example. On other occasions it denounced the "tyranny" of local employers.

Most centrally, though, it was the "democratic dimension" of Americanist language upon which unionists seized. In the context of the late '30s, that became industrial democracy—a justification for workers' rapidly expanding powers at the workplace.

Seeing Reds: The "democratic Americanist" moment in Woonsocket was over quickly. The ethnic workers that Spitz and Schmetz had nurtured in the '30s decided in the early '40s to run the union's shop themselves, and the first thing they did was to kick out their leaders. The charge: communism.

Anti-communism didn't arrive out of thin air. It was consciously bred, Gerstle argues, by a new church-sponsored secret organization, the Ligue Ouvriere Catholique, itself encouraged by a new wave of grassroots French-Canadian activism, both pro-unionist and anti-communist.

But it was the intervention of the wartime state that really spelled doom for the Americanist militant unions of Woonsocket. Gerstle shines here, underscoring the fundamental impact of the federal govern-

ment on local politics and ideology.

The government had its own notions of Americanism and mobilized the full force of its national propaganda machine to spew forth a new vision of Americanism onto every cereal box, bus ad and magazine cover in the country.

Americanism now became "cultural pluralism," in which blacks and whites, Jews and Catholics, the native-born and immigrants joined in the war effort like loving brothers and sisters. Those who didn't like each other were traitors.

The catch? One of those harmonious pairings was labor and capital. It was all to be one big happy family now. Thus as part of the package deal of cultural pluralism, anyone who acknowledged—let alone exacerbated—class conflict was promoting race hatred and therefore likened to Nazi Nordic supremacists.

This certainly wasn't a terrain on which Woonsocket's radicals could assert Americanism as industrial democracy, let alone socialism. As Gerstle argues, radicals in Woonsocket's ITU lost control of the political language of Americanism. Cast out by their own constituency, the

terrain of Americanism became anti-socialism.

Without their vision, the union swiftly fell apart. The new ethnic leadership juxtaposed communism with class harmony, smiling away at the city's textile capitalists. But smiles couldn't stop the owners' post-war flight to fields of cheaper labor in the U.S. South and abroad, and Woonsocket's employment base in woolen textiles evaporated.

More than words: Gerstle's book ultimately reveals Americanism to be as much a vessel as a contested terrain: once a given group believed in a given political or economic ideal, well, that was Americanism.

One lesson here for the left today is to seize upon Americanist language and speak about socialism as 21st-century Americanism. Gerstle's conclusion—alone worth the price of the book—underscores this, as he outlines the sequence of events through which the '80s right ended up in complete possession of the high ground of Americanism.

But Americanism is not the only language. We have our own terrain too, an economic one. Gerstle's story serves as an illustration. Woonsocket's French-Canadian unionists charged the radicals not just with communism but with outrageous demands that would make the textile mills unable to compete and cause them to leave town. And indeed, when the new leadership took charge, their union fell swift victim to exactly that fate as textile capital sought cheaper pastures.

Americanist dialogue alone couldn't solve this dilemma. Woonsocket's socialists could have turned this to their own ends: by talking socialism, as well as Americanism, they could have articulated a broader critique that said local industrial democracy wasn't enough—the structure of capitalism was the root cause of the Woonsocket workers' plight.

In other words, as socialists we have to put structural questions about capitalism on the table from the beginning; otherwise, our militant demands can, in fact, appear to undermine the interests of working people in the short run.

At the deepest level, we also have another terrain that is our own: the terrain of idealism. In a time of "lowered expectations," the left today can seize the high ground. We hold an ideal of a society that respects human dignity, that fights for true equality across racial and sexual lines, and that sees jobs and homes as basic rights.

All this may not be what Americanism has always historically been used to describe. But, as Gerstle shows so wonderfully, the future of what Americanism means is determined by fights both nasty and visionary in our own communities. And the powers we have to win those fights are by no means only those of language.

Dana Frank teaches in the history department at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

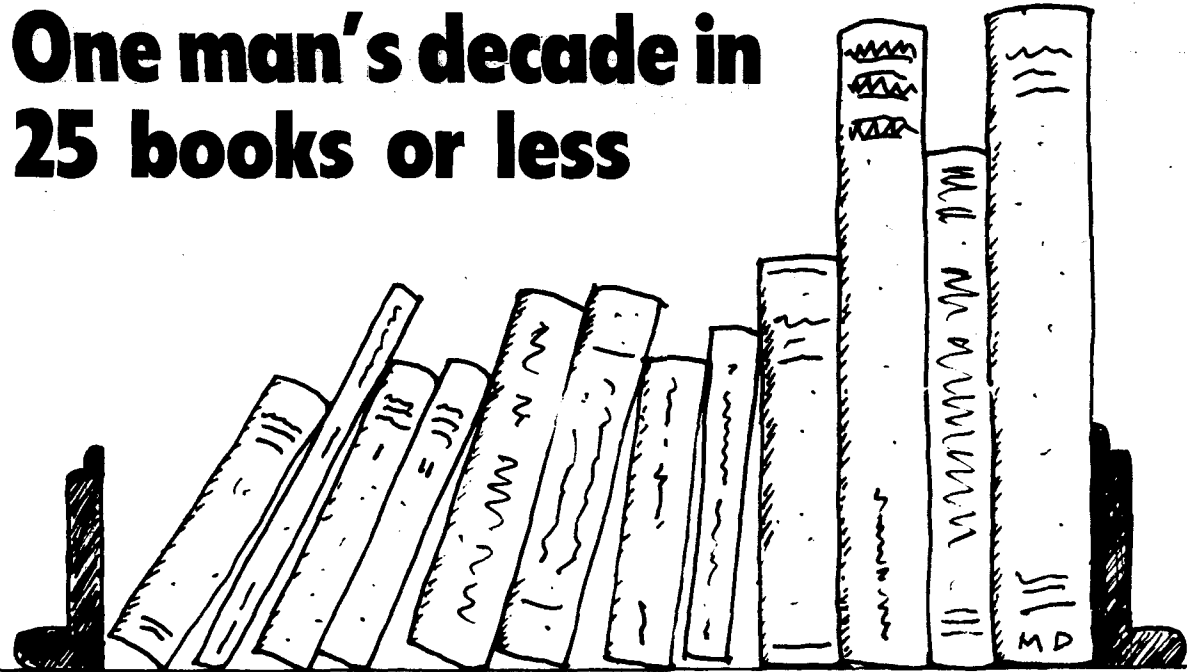
The Independent Textile Union was far more than a traditional labor union.

Cover illustration of the ITU News from April of 1939.



Rhode Island Historical Society

One man's decade in 25 books or less



By John B. Judis

THE '80S PRODUCED BETTER BOOKS on politics and economics than the previous decade. Perhaps this suggests a political awakening in the '90s as the wisdom in these books penetrates into everyday politics. But as with political books of the '70s, most of them shy away from the larger task of reconceptualizing our era.

The last great reconceptualization occurred from 1955 to 1967. It produced William Appleman Williams' *Contours of American History*, C. Wright Mills' *Power Elite*, Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd*, Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* and so on! No book written in the last decade measures up to any of these, either in depth or impact.

The best books of recent years are, typically, biographies—a medium conducive to commercial success but also limited as a means of appraising an era and country. Two of the best biographies of the last decade—Robert Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* and Edmund Morris's *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*—are literary rather than political achievements. Caro's biography seems too Shakespearean to trust as history and politics. Morris' book is a wonderful kid's

tale.

Many of the better political books also adopt the technique of personal, novelistic journalism pioneered by Tom Wolfe in the '60s. At its best, the personal drama illuminates the larger social history; at its worst, it becomes a vehicle of anti-intellectualism. But even in the most outstanding instances, like Randy Shilts' *And the Band Played On*, I find myself growing impatient waiting for the author to get to the point.

Despite the decade's rightward drift, conservative intellectuals produced few good political books in the '80s.

Conservative intellectuals, who had their golden age in the early '50s, produced few good political books in the '80s. George Gilder's books (*Wealth and Poverty*, *The Spirit of Enterprise*) were parodies of economic thought, and Allan Bloom's screed against relativism (*The Closing of the American Mind*) was based on a parody of American liberalism. But conservatives with a small "c" like Chalmers Johnson or Paul Kennedy continued to make a vital contribution.

Naturally this "best 25" list reflects my own limitations. While I read and review a lot, I don't read much about Latin America, Africa, the Mideast, the environment or nuclear war. I've left out novels, even though this means slighting authors like Alice Walker whose works have a political impact. I've limited the list to books by American authors, except for Alec Nove. I include Nove only because his book and Chalmers Johnson's, both written at the beginning of the decade, are the best guides to the world of the 1990s.

1. Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, Little Brown, 1980. A wonderful biography but also a cogent argument for a more realistic foreign policy. Along with the works of Paul Kennedy, James Chace (*Solvency*) and David Calleo (*The Imperious Economy*), this was a major argument against the imperial nostalgia of the Reagan years.

2. Sidney Blumenthal, *The Permanent Campaign*, Beacon 1980. Blumenthal explains how political campaigns, once the province of precinct captains, are now run by Washington consultants and pollsters. Published during the first Carter-Reagan campaign, it explains what produced Roger Ailes and Willie Horton in 1988.

3. Tracy Kidder, *The Soul of a New Machine*, Little Brown, 1981. The best book about the people who design computer hardware and

software. Important for understanding the social base and sensibility of new Democrats like Gary Hart and Michael Dukakis. Also the best written prologue to the '80s.

4. Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*, Stanford Univ. Press, 1982. Johnson's book explains what is different about Japanese (and East Asian) capitalism. Much of the middle is too detailed for non-specialists, but the introduction is

THE '80S

spellbindingly brilliant and one of the best things written about modern capitalism.

5. Kevin Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, Random House, 1982. Like Phillips' classic *Emerging Republican Majority*, this book is off in its immediate predictions but brilliant on long-term trends and underlying angsts.

6. Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, George Allen & Unwin, 1983. Nove's argument for market socialism anticipates the collapse of East Bloc communism. It is the best book on Marxism and socialism since Baran and Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital*, and in many ways the superior to that.

7. Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power*, Summit, 1983. Hersh's portrayal of Kissinger is a little too Manichean for my taste and slights Kissinger's philosophical dimension, but this is still the best book on Kissinger and on Nixon's foreign policy—an antidote to the recent silliness written about both men.

8. Robert Reich, *The Next American Frontier*, Times Books, 1983. A compelling brief for industrial policy and against what Reich calls "paper entrepreneurialism."

9. Jerry Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, South End, 1983. This book shows how Paul Nitze and his Committee on the Present Danger built the political foundations for the Reagan arms buildup. A good antidote to Strobe Talbott's panegyrics on Nitze.

10. Thomas Edsall, *The New Politics of Inequality*, Norton, 1984. Edsall shows how, as the popular movements of the '60s receded, aggressive business lobbies began to dominate Washington. A good companion piece is David Vogel's *Fluctuating Fortunes*.

11. Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, Univ. of California Press, 1984. Luker explains the different *Weltanschauungen* that underlie the enduring conflict between pro-lifers and pro-choices. A model of political sociology and the best book on the abortion controversy.

12. Robert Kuttner, *The Economic Illusion*, Houghton Mifflin, 1984. With an eye toward European social democracy, Kuttner shows how planning and social justice are not inconsistent with economic growth.

13. William Greider, *Secrets of the Temple*, Simon and Schuster, 1987. Greider's book is impossibly long and too populist for my taste, but like Hersh on Kissinger, Greider has

set a standard for books about Paul Volcker and the Reagan years that will take decades to match. Indispensable for understanding the Carter and Reagan years.

14. J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground*, Knopf, 1985. Lukas' book is somewhat too long and burdened by a little too much background music but is the best book on the busing controversy of the '70s and a guide to the continuing racial strife in America.

15. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Simon and Schuster, 1987. Kennedy's best chapters are his earliest, but the book as a whole is the most powerful statement of the thesis that the U.S. is following Great Britain down the path of imperial overextension and economic underattention.

16. Stephen S. Cohen and John Zysman, *Manufacturing Matters*, Basic Books, 1987. Cohen and Zysman destroy the myth that America can prosper as a service society.

17. Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, St. Martins, 1987. This book is both highly informative and very moving. The best single book on the AIDS crisis.

18, 19. (A tossup.) James Miller's *Democracy in the Streets*, Simon and Schuster, 1987, and Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties*, Bantam, 1987, both do justice to the '60s. Gitlin's has more scope and poetry, but Miller's is a pointed reminder of what was most positive in the early new left.

20. Martin J. Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988. Sklar's history of corporate progressivism is astonishingly relevant to the debates about government and the free market that are going on today.

21. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters*, Simon and Schuster, 1988. Branch's biography of Martin Luther King Jr. clearly establishes the religious roots of the civil-rights movement and makes an eloquent case for King's genius and heroism.

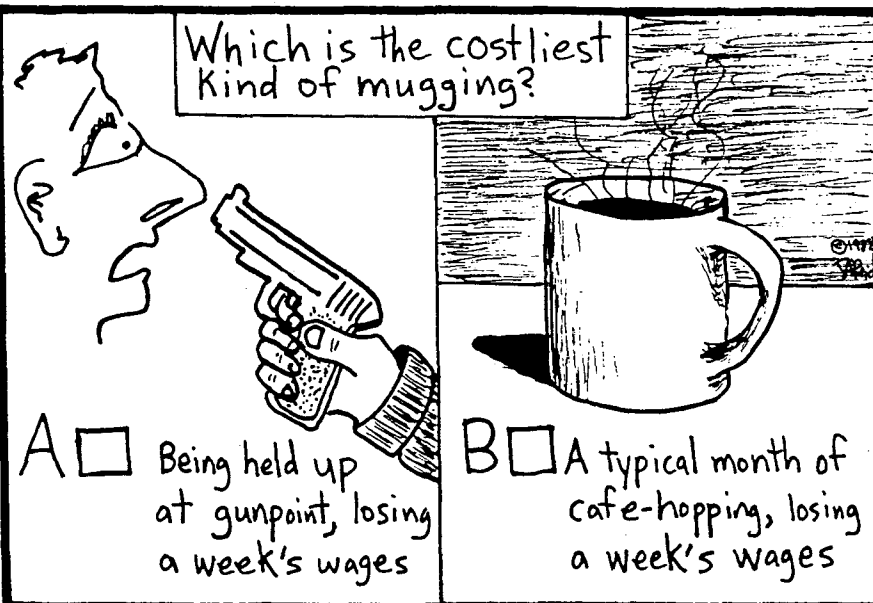
22. Clyde Prestowitz, *Trading Places*, Basic Books, 1988. Prestowitz's book is the most telling memoir by a Reagan official and the best book on U.S.-Japan relations in the '80s. It contains a persuasive case for industrial policy from a lifelong Republican.

23. Leo Lowenstein, *What's Wrong with Wall Street?*, Addison, Wesley, 1988. A Veblenesque analysis of Wall Street by a former Wall Streeter turned professor. The best book about the takeover mania, program trading and institutional investors.

24. David Osborne, *Laboratories of Democracy*, Harvard Business School Press, 1988. Osborne explains how most of the innovative social and economic policy is coming from the states.

25. Max Holland, *When the Machine Stops*, Harvard Business School Press, 1989. An eloquent case study of how attention to finance rather than manufacturing destroyed the American machine-tool industry.

Freelance Writer Economics Quiz



IN THE ARTS

By Arthur Silverblatt

Families and fries that bind: fast moods and fast foods

THE HARDEES FAST-FOOD CHAIN released a series of television ads over the summer that barely displayed its product. The ad campaign consisted of six spots that feature Marty, a fictitious manager, and his relationship with the customers.

Nancy Bolts, account executive for Ogilvy and Mather, the agency responsible for the Hardees account, maintains that the campaign's objective was to build a brand image that would encourage consumers "to

ADVERTISING

take fast-food restaurants [specifically Hardees] more seriously." She describes this series as a "smaller pitch" that reduces its claims and thereby adds to its credibility. In fact, the indirect approach embodied in the Hardees ads is a shrewd response to societal conditions related to the breakdown of the nuclear family, positioning Hardees not merely as a fast-food restaurant but as a place for convenient, disposable "fast family"—an ambitious and attractive promise indeed.

In American culture, mealtime has traditionally united the family. But the rapid growth of fast-food restaurants reflects the changing American lifestyle in regard to meals. Evening schedules are frequently so disjointed within a family that members must fend for themselves, eliminating even this ritual as an opportunity for the nuclear family to function as a unit.

Soap and sandwich: The "Marty" spots are modeled after the soap opera genre. The ads show people facing common issues of contemporary culture: loneliness, conformity and acceptance. The episodic spots feature a variety of recurring characters, all of whom are attracted to Hardees for comfort and support.

As the audience gets acquainted with the characters, we begin to identify with their plight. We are in effect witnessing the formation of a family at Hardees. The young boy who has been hired in the first episode is, in the third segment, introduced by Marty to "Jess," a directionless young woman who confides her unhappiness to Marty. The pair appear together as a couple in the fourth spot, a family celebration promoting Hardees cheeseburgers.

As head of the Hardees family, Marty is the quintessential late-20th-century father figure. In the first segment, in which he hires a new employee, Marty is depicted as a no-nonsense manager, tough but fair. He believes in discipline, explaining, "[The customers] give me a hard time, I give you a hard time.... I'm the boss."

Marty is a hard worker who has earned everything he's got. When the young applicant corrects his English,

Marty snorts, "College boy, eh?" Marty embodies the wisdom of experience: "Why bother [grilling rather than frying their chicken]? Common sense." Marty finally gives the young man a chance, showing faith in him by hiring him. Young men, particularly young men with college degrees and limited prospects, need the guidance, support and faith of a father figure.

Marty is honest and genuine, a person to believe in in this cynical era. He is a rather sloppy, leather-faced man in his early 50s with thin hair—an ordinary person, in contrast with the airbrushed model type we are accustomed to seeing in commercials. In one episode, Stan, a new employee with a New York accent, suggests some "gimmicks" to Marty as a means of selling food. Stan is rebuffed by Marty, who exclaims, "Their [New York] ways are not our ways" and that "goodness, not gimmicks" is the key to Hardees' success.

Although the ads are set in Yourtown, USA, it is clear that this Hardees is located in the Midwest. The Midwest represents America's heartland, part of a mythic small-town America founded on the traditional American values of honesty, family and good value. During the first segment, in which Marty is orienting his new employee to the menu items, he says that the head office has informed him that the grilled chicken sandwich will be more popular than the cheeseburger. "They tell me," he exclaims, hooting at the absurdity of some head office executive in New York who thinks he is more in touch with the customers than Marty. "You know what that's called?" Marty snorts. "Marketing." This is of course ironic coming from Marty, himself a fictional product of the marketing department of a big-city ad agency.

Marty is a hardworking guy just trying to survive like the rest of us. In the second segment, it is closing time and the manager is finally able to sit in his office and relax with some tasty Hardees chicken strips. "Service is sacrifice" reads the sign above his desk. Like a good father, Marty must once again sacrifice. An employee informs him that a customer has ordered chicken strips; due to a shortage at this hour, he must surrender his own meal. The visual punch line is that the customer turns out to be Marty's son, but the message is that Marty is selfless, prepared to treat any of his customers just as he would his own son.

As the episodes unfold, it becomes evident that Marty is more than a one-dimensional disciplinarian; he is a compassionate, sympathetic father

confessor. The fourth episode begins with two women standing in line—a rather zaftig blonde and a petite brunette who have come "home" to Hardees after a shopping spree. The blonde is whining to her companion that she must order a salad because of her weight problem.

We see flashbacks of the blonde at the store struggling into a pair of pants. The women sit down and are joined by the ever-present Marty. Marty circulates freely among the patrons; he seemingly knows everyone and is happy to engage in conversations over a biscuit, cheeseburger or salad. In the world of Hardees, you need never eat alone.

As the two women exchange envious compliments about each other's figures, Marty observes, "Everyone wants what everyone else's got." This drive-through counseling session is pithy, personal and effective. The women are cleansed, at peace and ready to resume their meals. The blonde remarks, "That guy [Marty] should be in politics." Indeed, Marty is the persona that worked so successfully for Ronald Reagan—a genuine, folksy, caring father figure.

Home is where the heart burns: Marty is something of a late-20th-century philosopher, offering easy, disposable solutions to complex problems. In the sequence with Jess, she confides to Marty that "I've got

to get out of here." Marty good-naturedly reminds Jess that it's hard to find biscuits this tasty anywhere else. Jess responds, "There's more to life than biscuits." Marty asks Jess, "Where do you think you're going? You don't always get what you want by going someplace else."

He is suggesting that happiness begins at home, even if home is Hardees. Marty then adds, "There's somebody I want you to meet." As the scene cuts to a shot of the young college boy, the audience understands that in the ad's remaining five seconds Marty has been able to solve her problem. In the process, Jess' dilemma has been reduced from a quest for meaning to simply needing a date. In the world of fast, prepackaged answers to complex questions, you can forgo all personal responsibility by relying on another person (in this case a boyfriend) to solve your problems and make you whole.

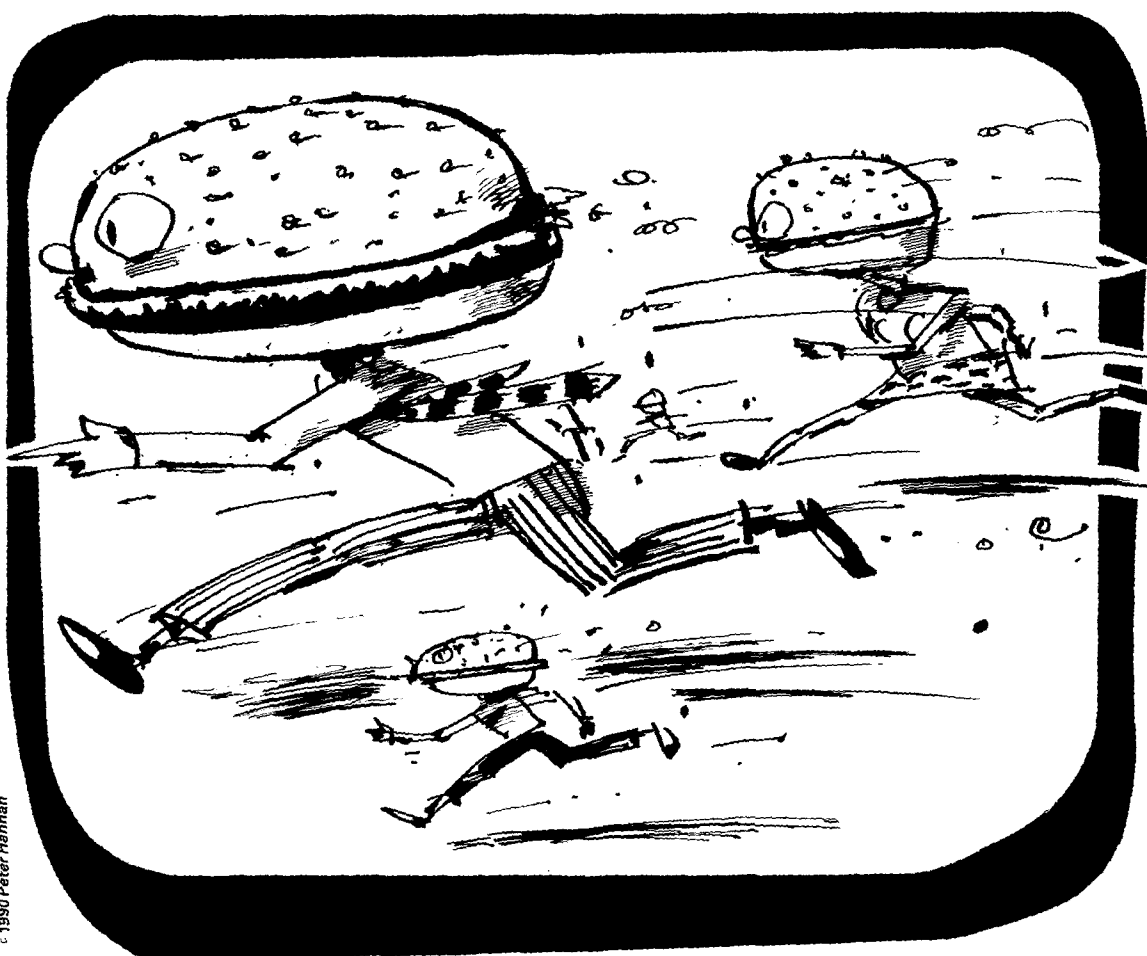
An advertising campaign positions Hardees as a convenient, disposable "fast family."

The commercial's visual style cleverly reinforces the fundamental messages and provides important insights into the themes presented in the Hardees campaign. The ads employ the swinging camera technique that is currently so fashionable in the Levis 501 jeans ads. The camera moves a bit before settling on a particular shot, giving the impression that what the audience sees is purely a random selection; meaningful connections between human beings are undoubtedly occurring throughout the restaurant, waiting to be discovered by the camera (or the potential Hardees customer).

The selection of music similarly supports the series' themes. Most of the ads use the popular '50s hit by Tommy Edwards, "It's All in the Game." Beyond the wholesome, family connotation of the '50s, the lyrics are revealing. "Many a tear has to fall, but it's all in the game."

Advertisements for McDonalds have successfully conveyed the message that fast food is fun, thereby dominating the prepubescent market. The Hardees ads focus on a different world-view, reflecting the diminished expectations of the '80s. Life can be hard—but it's "all in the game." Not fun but survival is our goal. Marty is no Ronald McDonald clown. He's friendly but very serious. He knows what we need: a community of people who will provide support and comfort and who can give us the strength to persevere. The almost primal appeal of the Hardees campaign lies in its promise of not just a burger but spiritual sustenance in a hungry age. ■

Arthur Silverblatt is chairman of the media communications department at Webster University in St. Louis.



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Cuba

Continued from page 24

ern Europe and the Soviet Union: "We must retrench ourselves in the revolutionary line ... because now, there are two types of revolutionaries, two types of socialists, two types of Communists: good ones and bad ones, as defined by imperialism. And we have the honor of being among the bad ones."

Cuba, in such rhetoric, is the Little Island That Could, the bastion of the humanist ideals of socialism. And there's plenty of support, especially so long as the U.S. maintains the blockade, for a self-image as embattled heroes and victims of imperialism.

At the same time, there's disaffection within Cuba about hypocrisy and corruption, perhaps most boldly symbolized by the widespread belief that Fidel and Raul Castro have been involved in drug trafficking. It is a belief that was not effectively dispelled by the recent televised trials, after which Col. Arnaldo Ochoa, reputed to have a popular following as a military and political leader, was executed. Cuba's uncertain and isolated future also stirs subterranean discussion of alternative approaches, a subject to which Cuban journalists and artists repeatedly turned during the festival.

Quotes from the underground: You get the subterranean news on what the Cubans call "Radio Bemba," the gossip grapevine. On Radio Bemba official news is interpreted with an eye toward conspiracy theory. (With managed news, nothing can ever be accidental.) This is the network on which an unpublished incident at a recent artists' conference was spread—an incident that suggests both open discussion of Cuba's current problems and the limitations on opening debate. After a

panel in October on social responsibility of the artist, called "The Enemy Is in the Garden," a sardonic and popular comic confronted the girlfriend of a major party official who is in charge of political propaganda. "Watch it," she reportedly told him. "The enemy is closer than you think—it's in the kitchen." "No," he told her, "it's in your bedroom!"—to general applause.

Radio Bemba is the circuit on which the recent popular song "William Tell," by Carlos Varela, has traveled. Even though it's not been programmed on radio, Varela's cautionary tale of Tell's son, who demands that his father now put the apple on his head, is widely known and seen as an allegory of a younger generation that chafes at the hypocritical rhetoric of an older one. (Varela, like other artists an employee of the Cuban state, regularly performs this song in concerts, including one at the festival.) The gossip circuit also carried the news of the dismissal of a journalist for the daily newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* (Revolutionary Youth). When asked on a call-in show whether the paper actually represented youth, the reporter said that it didn't and was fired. The fact that Varela performs and that such a question was raised on a call-in show, further displays the seesawing within Cuba on opening debate.

And of course Radio Bemba is also the circuit on which jokes travel. For instance, Fidel's barber has a habit of whispering "perestroika!" as he cuts Fidel's hair. Why? "Because your hair is so curly it's hard to cut, and whenever I say that word your hair stands on end." And how did they discover that Adam and Eve were Cuban? Because they had no clothes, were fighting over an apple and had been kicked out of paradise.

While debate creeps in around the edges,

the most official media remain sternly old-guard. The official party publication *Granma*, widely called "Berenice" after a soap-opera character who knows everything and tells nothing, offers a triumphalist version of Cuban news. TV delivers curt news bulletins from Eastern Europe, casting the news as evidence of chaos, turmoil and the collapse of humanist principles.

Guarded hope: In the working creative community, there is a sense of guarded hope for reform within the existing system, as well as a sharp sense of the limitations at a moment when Cuba appears abandoned by its friends and assaulted by its enemies.

"We're doing counterprogramming to Radio Marti in our newsreels," said Melchor Casals, whose sharply ironic and investigative documentaries have distinguished him over the years. "And that's good. But we should be getting there first and setting the agenda."

"It's important to have channels to confront hypocrisy and corruption. For instance, in the recent trials the knowledge was widespread, but there were no channels to reach the authorities. We need a more independent media."

"I don't want to work for the enemy," he said. "But our communications policy is creating an audience for the enemy. We're creating an informational underground."

Casals' two latest documentaries are evidence both of the problem and of the current flip-flopping between openness and caution. They're witty, pointed indictments of corruption (including teacher-aided cheating to meet educational goals) done in an imagistic style that makes a bow to music-video techniques. Both were shown at the festival (though not at key times); one has aired on

television, while the other has been rejected and is under negotiation.

Enrique Colina, whose own documentaries have a dry critical bite to them, sighed when asked about the opportunities for wider discussion in the Cuban media. "It's very delicate," he said. "There's an internal ferment that we stifle at our peril—it'll just surface in other ways. We need open debate, because we need to find answers that are right for us—after all, we're not Eastern Europe."

"But at the same time, the massive changes in the socialist world have created a terrible economic crisis, and an accompanying sense of being embattled. And that's not a conducive atmosphere to open discussion."

Messages of the movies: In film, there is a crisis of style and content. The film institute, ICAIC, was founded with the revolution with a mission to chronicle its evolution. Its early successes—films like *Memories of Underdevelopment* and *Lucia*—received worldwide acclaim. But more recently, the institute has produced a regular quota of competent and all-too-often unexciting features. Recent restructuring that allows for more creative control by directors has won filmmakers' approval, and it appears that forthcoming projects may renew international interest in Cuban cinema.

But if the festival's opening night film was any guide, Cuban cinema is still groping toward that lost connection with the audience. *The Belle of the Alhambra*, a kind of Cuban *Cabaret*, rediscovers the spicy nightclub revues of the late '20s and features elaborate musical numbers and—unusual for a Cuban film—bold sex scenes. Its production values are high, and not even the fact that one of its actors defected shortly before the festival opening removed it from its prime slot.

"For Cuba, this film is very important," said the leading TV film critic Enrique Colina. "We've suffered from prudishness and moralism, and it's also good to rediscover the vitality of our past popular culture." But you'd have to be Cuban to appreciate the significance of the film; seen from outside, it's a lovely, somewhat stilted period film.

At the year-old Cuban radio-TV-film school, designed to bring new ideas to institutions often still dominated by their original founders, students seemed optimistic. "Yes, it's hard to tackle political issues head on," said one. "But there's a lot of experiment in terms of form, new ways to express ourselves, and that's just as important." His cultural heroes ranged from Soviet filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, whose austere, mystical films baffle audiences, to Steven Spielberg.

The international film school, located outside Havana but funded through the international Foundation for New Latin American Cinema, is by contrast in a period of retrenchment. The ambitious three-year program has been cut back to two, partly because of budget problems (to which Cuba's crisis contributes, since its in-kind contribution of facilities is substantial). No incoming students have been accepted for a year.

Cuba is entering a tense—or, to use Enrique Colina's word, "delicate"—new phase. Radio Bemba will be tracking in minute and sometimes paranoid detail the reactions of Cuban media to the challenge of new solutions. If the often frank discussions of Cuban artists and journalists at the Festival of New Latin American Cinema were any indication, the media will continue to refract unevenly the search for changes and popular participation in making them.

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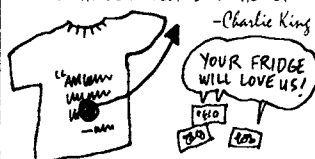
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Redwood Cultural Work presents Pete Seeger, Holly Near, Ronnie Gilbert and Marcel Khalife in an unprecedented benefit concert for the Middle East Children's Alliance on January 12, 1990, at 8 p.m. at the Berkeley Community Theater in Berkeley, Calif. Please call (415) 428-9191 or (415) 548-0542 for more information. Tickets are \$15, \$18.50 and \$22.50.

NEW YORK January 13-14

The Funding Exchange celebrates a Decade of Funding Social Justice with a weekend of special events. World Film Premiere of *Diego Rivera: I Paint What I See*; Jan. 13, 1990; Lincoln Center. Anniversary Party celebrating "A Decade of

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January 16

"Upheaval in Eastern Europe: How Should the U.S. Respond?" Forum sponsored by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy East and West, with Lawrence Weschler of the *New Yorker*; Joanne Landy, Campaign for Peace and Democracy East and West; U.S. Representative Barney Frank and Christopher Hitchens of *The Nation*. 7 p.m. at the New School Auditorium, 65 Fifth Ave. (near 14th St.), New York City. Free. Reception will follow. For info: CPD EW, P.O. Box 1640, New York, NY 10025, (212) 724-1157.

PHILADELPHIA January 15

The Brandywine Peace Community of Philadelphia is sponsoring a "Martin Luther King Jr. Day Service of Rededica-

tion to Justice and Nonviolence at General Electric" on January 15 at noon. The community also has ecumenical worship and planning meetings two times each month and weekly vigils at the GE plant. Contact the Brandywine office at (215) 544-1818.

YORKTOWN HEIGHTS, NY February 16-18

Beaver Conference Farm, an ecumenical retreat and conference center located north of New York City, is offering a special retreat for college students on "Careers, Grades and Consumerism: College Life and Nonviolence." Contact: BCF, Underhill Ave., RD #3, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598, (914) 962-6033.

SANTA MONICA, CA February 17-20

"The Third Wave of Feminism: A Candidly Revolutionary Approach"; Conference will focus on theory and strategies to winning permanent social and political equality for all women. For more information, contact: Radical Women National Office, 523A Valencia, San Francisco, CA 94110, (415) 864-1278. Wheelchair accessible and child care provided.

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Cuba's conundrum

By Pat Aufderheide

HAVANA, CUBA

AT THE 11TH FESTIVAL OF NEW LATIN American Cinema this December in Havana, Cuban media politics were as much on display as were the films. The annual gala showcasing Latin American film and video drew more than a thousand foreign attendees, as well as half a million Cuban spectators, to the hundreds of films and videos screened.

Tensions within Cuban media kept popping through the surface of the event

some have called "the party that never stops." It was, of course, a hot topic of conversation among Latin Americans, for whom the fate of the festival itself—apparently secure but always short of funds—is a matter of great concern. The festival provides a unique forum, and a market, for a fragile and ever-more-economically embattled industry.

And it was a topic that Cuban officials themselves showcased.

Cuban media are facing external challenges both from the U.S. and from the

increasingly open—and critical—media of the disintegrating socialist bloc. And those challenges are amplified by pressure from within Cuba, both to respond to international media and to create forums for open debate about Cuba's future.

Turning on TV Marti: "We will do everything in our power to block TV Marti," said Reinaldo Montero, a Cuban vice minister of communications at a press conference held during the festival. The proposed U.S. television station is slated to begin a four-month test run in January, and Cubans are worried. Radio Marti is already a thorn in the side of the Cuban government.

"We will not reveal specifically what we'll do, but do not doubt that we will retaliate," emphasized Ricardo Alarcon, a vice minister of foreign relations.

"This is a question of sovereignty, not programming," he explained. "We get Florida signals here, and we program a lot of U.S. movies on television ourselves. In fact, we see more foreign TV shows here than Americans do on their TV. But this is aggression, and we have the right of self-defense."

When Radio Marti began in 1985, Cuban officials also promised to retaliate, and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), which opposes both Radio and TV Marti, feared jamming. But in fact retaliatory action was perfunctory.

Meanwhile, Radio Marti has grown in popularity, although its reputation is smudged by news errors that lead to general skepticism. "We know we've got lots of problems," one taxi driver told me grumpily. "We don't need people to tell us problems we don't have."

Radio Marti, also known as "The Unmentionable Station" and "Accidental Radio," has drawn new listeners by reading excerpts from *Moscow News* and *Sputnik*, Soviet publications now banned in Cuba. They are banned because, as an editorial in the official party newspaper *Granma* put it, they "deny history and make chaos of the present" and defend "bourgeois democracy as the highest form of popular participation, as well as a fascination with the American way of life."

That fascination is not unknown in a country currently plagued by shortages of everyday products such as meat and beer, and where many families have relatives in Miami. Some of them arrive in the daily charter plane for visits, laden with goods and with dollars to spend in Cuba's dollar stores, where you can buy VCRs, refrigerators and food unavailable in the rationed domestic stores.

Radio Marti's greatest effect may have been to stir up Cuban journalism, as even Carlos Aldana, secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, acknowledged in a recent *Granma* interview. That improvement is signaled in occasional investiga-

tive reports, in counterprogramming to Radio Marti's announcements, and in an attempt to offer more popular features, such as call-in shows and international programming.

Floating a trial balloon: Whether or not TV Marti will survive its test run is debatable, both for technical and political reasons. Transmission would be via an offshore balloon, particularly vulnerable to weather conditions and probably inoperable 30 to 70 percent of the time. The station's \$16 million annual funding is dependent on the success of the test run,

The island's culture makers must navigate tropical currents and political doldrums.

and it is in any case only secure through 1991. The project is subject to a variety of political pressures, including those from the NAB. Cubans got an opportunity in late December to discuss these issues in Havana with representatives of the U.S. broadcast industry and with Rep. Al Swift (D-WA).

But whether or not TV Marti "succeeds," it has already had an effect on Cuban media. Cuban television has been purchasing relatively expensive foreign programming and is considering expanding the broadcast day, including on the channel that TV Marti was to broadcast on. And although television executive Gary Gonzalez denies that this is because of TV Marti, other sources within Cuban television are convinced that it is.

Perestroika, no: But TV Marti is only one of the challenges facing the highly controlled Cuban media. The upheaval in Eastern Europe and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union have left Cuba politically and economically isolated. Some of the changes are traceable—if one reads between the lines—in the media.

Take, for instance, the problem with bus parts, for which Cuba has been dependent on Hungary. A Hungarian newspaper has openly criticized the recent drug and corruption trials in Cuba. *Granma*, in turn, savagely attacked the Hungarian paper's lack of solidarity. When it came time to renew the contract for bus parts, Hungary raised the prices some 40 percent. Buses are in short supply, and Cuba is attempting to build an all-Cuban bus. Meanwhile, a joke from the '70s is being revived: "Cuban buses are like aspirin—one every four hours."

In a recent speech, Fidel Castro succinctly described the official Cuban stance toward the changes sweeping across East-

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Opening night of the 11th annual Festival of New Latin American Cinema, Dec. 4, 1989, Havana (Karl Marx Theater).